MORTIMER'S GOLD

HAROLD HORN

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By

HAROLD HORN

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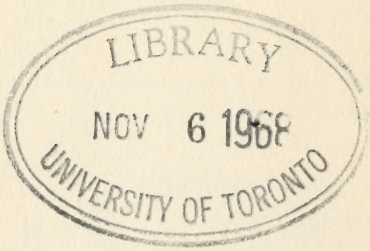

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CHAPTER I

A PRECIOUS FAMILY SECRET

THE doctor, his stethoscope in his ears, listened to the action of my heart. He was not an army doctor, but an elderly physician with some professional and personal knowledge of myself which dated back to childhood. That is to say, he knew me well. So it was but natural that he should sound me, a convalescent, both for his own satisfaction and for mine. The medical board would see me no more,—indeed, I was discharged from the Army, and certified as having a "perfect physique." In spite of such a flattering official report I knew that Dr. Bernard's opinion would be more sympathetic. He was a friend of the family. I ought rather to say he had been a friend of the family, for the whole family of the Mortimers was dead—excepting me, Richard—which sad fact made me all the more anxious to remain alive. Having survived all the other Mortimers I came back from Europe determined to keep on surviving them. But my heart was affected. I had been home four weeks, and the doctor examined me every week.

"I am now of the opinion," said he, "that it is certainly functional and not organic."

"You mean I have nothing wrong with me?" I replied.

"I mean that you can be cured. But it rests with you, Dick," said he, putting away his istrument into its case. "You must cure yourself."

"Must cure myself? Well, what must I do?"

"Go away. Take a long holiday. Pack up at once. Go to the sea, or go to the Rockies."

"Is that all? Why, it suits me very well here," I objected.

"The summer is coming on. Don't stay in a hot stifling city when you can get out of it."

"Oh, doctor!" I protested, "I have a lot of things to do at present. I'll take a real holiday later. It's so fine to be home again that I am enjoying every minute of it."

"Then why do you come here in the condition you are in this morning?" he suddenly stormed. "You are not as well as you were last week. What is the matter with you? Your heart is going like a steam hammer! Did you run all the way over here this morning? I told you to take things easily—why don't you do so? You have a lot of things to do? What nonsense! All soldiers find the return to civil life very difficult and trying. And you are a nervous case—you ought to take great care of yourself."

"But, doctor, I am doing."

"Well, sit down, then, and control yourself. Your father was a calm man—why can't you be calm and steady like your father?"

"Calm like my father?" I exclaimed, "Why, you know, doctor, everybody says I am just like my father in that respect. But let me tell you, doctor, if my father had ever had on his mind what I have on mine he would have gone wild with excitement."

That was letting the cat out of the bag, for I had not intended to tell Dr. Bernard, or anybody else, what had lately spoilt my peace of mind. The old man looked at me attentively as though I would continue, or as though by mere looking he could learn what was in my thoughts. And Dr. Bernard certainly knows something about the human soul, as well as a great deal about the human body.

"Something on your mind? What have you got on your mind?"

"Oh, nothing!"

I wished I had not hinted at it.

"Something on your mind, you irresponsible young man! You mean something on your conscience, don't you? What mischief have you been getting into?"

"Oh, I haven't been getting into any mischief—not yet," I replied, laughing at the thought of it, "but I may do so shortly."

He still regarded me intently.

"Hm! Something on your mind indeed! Yet you come to me with your heart! Why don't you speak the truth about yourself? What is the matter with you?"

"Doctor," I said solemnly, though of course I

was not taking him too seriously, "I come to you with my heart because you are supposed to know something about hearts."

"Well, and so I do. You are in love," said he.

"What!"

"You are in love. That's what is wrong with your heart, and also with your mind."

"Well, that's a new diagnosis, doctor," I said lightly, but I felt my cheeks burn suddenly.

"It's easy to make," he snapped, and then added in a gentler tone, "Come, tell me about it, Dick."

I was convicted. If he had not persisted in his enquiries about what was on my heart I could have avoided telling him what was on my mind. As it was I was compelled to feign a misunderstanding and to take refuge in reverting to the latter subject, and so I told my secret.

"There's nothing to tell at present," I said.

"You can tell me who the dear, sweet, poor unfortunate girl is," said he, with some irony, and inconsistently added, "I hope she responds all right?"

Now, no man can bear to be flayed alive in this fashion, even by a doctor who is also an old friend of the family. It was perfectly, painfully true—I was in love and languishing. But could I talk about it—to any living man?

It is not a very serious matter merely to take a fancy to a girl, but to be in love is awful. A man may come across many an attractive woman, like her, love her, and leave her. But to be startled out

of all your inherent and cultured complacence by a woman different to any you have ever known—to like her, to love her and to leave her—is both a joy and a sorrow. Such joy and sorrow were mine. And also I had pride, for I gloried in the slavery of it. I was prouder of my love than of my D.S.O. But could I talk about it? Never! I had not talked about it with Katherine herself. How then could I open my lips to anyone else? Any other secret rather!

We were in Dr. Bernard's study at the time, and the doors were shut. I opened the doors in turn, very dramatically, looking into the consulting room and into the entrance hall. No eavesdropper was to be seen. Closing the doors I took a seat close to Dr. Bernard. He was amused at my actions.

"Doctor Bernard," I said in a low tone, "let me tell you that I certainly have got something on my mind. It is a most exciting matter."

"Exciting? Is that the feeling?"

"Yes. I couldn't sleep last night."

"Ah, me! Don't tell me the girl has disappointed you!"

"The girl!" I growled, exasperated. "She—she is far enough away."

Could I not steer him off the subject?

"Far away is she? Then you mean you left her in England? Is she English?"

"No, Canadian, and she's in Scotland," said I sulkily.

"Good! Very good! What is her name?"

"Katherine Dunbar. Say, doctor, you're an awful inquisitor."

"Well, well, Dick, so I am. But you know I take a fatherly interest in you. You must not mind an old man asking prying questions. I want to know where you stand. I haven't seen you for years, and I want to know from your own lips what your hopes and aims are now that you are home and safe. When your mother was dying, as you know, she spoke to me about your future. I am trying to take your father's and mother's place—a little bit."

He sighed. I was sobered. The mention of my mother was sobering enough. My only brother fell at the First Landing on Gallipoli in 1915, and the news caused my mother's death soon after. I was in France, the only Mortimer left. For the greater part of 1917 I was in hospital and a convalescent in Scotland with five bullet holes in my neck and shoulders. Most of the time was spent in Edinburgh, and there in Edinburgh was Katherine Dunbar. Katherine was at St. Leonard's College before the war, and just leaving. So she was detained four long years, a V.A.D. In 1918 I saw her again. But I saw her every day, every night—in my dreams. Ah, me! When again in the flesh? But Dr. Bernard was staring at me again as though to make another diagnosis.

"Well, was there something else you were going to mention?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied, "there was something. I had a most exciting time last night and this morning

before I came here—rummaging among books and papers. You know that my great-grandfather was a trader?''

''I know that—and he was murdered by Indians wasn't he?''

''Yes. What do you know about him, doctor?''

''Oh, I don't know anything about him beyond that. I remember that your father told me he was murdered—at the Mackinaw, I think. Your father fancied he was a very bold and perhaps not over honourable man.''

'' 'Not over honourable'? Why did he think that?''

''Well, Dick, I shouldn't have said that. It was not the word your father used. I think that 'enterprising' would be better. No doubt he was a very courageous adventurer. Some of the best of men were murdered in the early days. There was a massacre of the garrison at Michillimackinac. Hardly anybody escaped, I think.''

''But, doctor, it wasn't at that time. My great grandfather wasn't born at the time of the great massacre.''

''Wasn't he?''

The doctor was apparently not very interested. It spurred me to rouse him.

''Now look here, doctor. If my father thought that he was all wrong in his history. The massacre in Fort Michillimakinac was in 1763. Did he really think that was the date of Wilton Mortimer's death?''

''Hm—yes—your father thought so.''

"Well, he wasn't right. He was murdered in 1799."

"Oh."

"He was famous among the Indians. They regarded him as a great friend. Now, why do you think he was murdered?"

"I have no idea."

"You will have in a minute, doctor. Wilton Mortimer, the rich trader, the famous friend of the Red Man, started from the Sault with a whaleboat laden heavily. He was alone. The next that is known of him is that on arrival at Mackinaw Island he was murdered. Now what for? I have just found out the motive for the crime. What do you think it was?"

"I don't know, Dick. Perhaps it was his cargo they were after. Was it whisky?"

"Yes, doctor, it was his cargo they were after. But it was not whisky. What he started with from Sault Sainte Marie was a boat-load of gold!"

"Gold? I don't believe it! How do you know?"

"It was gold, doctor," I asserted solemnly, "but the Indians never got it. Come home with me, or come down to our house to-night and I'll prove it to you. I have begun to tell you my secret and I may as well finish the story."

"Gold!" exclaimed the doctor, now fully awake to the importance of what was on my mind. "Gold! Oh-ho! So that was it? And the Indians didn't get it from him? Then where was it?"

"Where it is now. And I'm going to get it."

"Have you found out where it is?"

"Yes, doctor," said I, rising, "but I can tell you no more at present. You'll treat it all as a confidence won't you?"

"Oh, every word of it, strictly. I'll come over to you to-night. But if the Indians were following him from the Sault how was it they did not catch him before he got the gold hidden?"

"I'll tell you all about it to-night. Don't tell Mrs. Bernard or anyone. Wilton Mortimer was cautious and clever enough to take the gold somewhere unknown, and then to have nothing but bags of sand when he arrived at the Mackinaw. Sand was all the Indians got for their trouble."

"Dick, Dick, this is a great story!" exclaimed Dr. Bernard, "and you think you know where it is still—after all this time?"

"Yes, I think I do," I replied finally, laughing gaily.

Doctor Bernard, with a word of advice about my heart, promised to see me in the evening, and I departed for my own home.

Our house is a new one, that is to say, it has been built no more than eight years, but everything in it is old—old and good. The house is constructed of white stone, presenting the appearance of an Elizabethan manor house, and stands in charming grounds full of magnificent elms. My father possessed a quantity of massive furniture, and my mother, when she bought this place, took with it pictures, books, ornaments and plate. I cannot say that my widowed mother was most wise in selling the old homestead of the

Mortimers and buying this expensive residence, for her means were not sufficient to keep it up properly, and my brother and I were only at Varsity in those days. But now it has turned out all right after all.

When I left Dr. Bernard I hastened home to luncheon alone. Mrs. Devereux, the housekeeper, attended to my needs in the large panelled dining-room. She, an old servant, and the only one I had, had all the reliable qualities of the proverbial family servant.

"What does the doctor say to you, Mr. Mortimer?" she asked.

"He says I must go away from here," I replied.

"Go away from here, Mr. Richard?" said she in alarm, for it sounded as if I might discharge her and sell the house.

"Just for a few weeks or for a month or two, Mrs. Devereux," I assured her. "I shall probably go west until September"—it was June then—"and by that time I shall be able, I hope, to settle down here for a while. Could you not get someone to come to stay with you for the summer? Your daughter might be glad to visit you here. You could have the run of the garden and be quite happy. Of course you can't stay here alone."

"Oh, no, Sir, I daren't stay here alone. I don't know if my daughter could come or not."

"Well, get someone, Mrs. Devereux," said I. "It does not matter much whom you get. I am

off to-morrow. Do not leave the house because I may come flying back any time, or I may have to send you a message."

She promised to get someone to stay in the house with her in my absence, and I was satisfied. With that little matter disposed of I could freely give my attention to the excursion I had already decided to make. So after my mid-day meal I settled down to business in the cool library. I lit my pipe, opened the safe, and took out a large portfolio. The safe, formerly my father's was high and deep, and literally crammed with documents, deeds, letters and disused silverware. When I came into possession of it it was opened for the first time in years, my mother's lawyer alone knowing the combination. As it was supposed to contain nothing but rubbish it had not been examined at my mother's death. Since I had taken charge of it, however, I had been giving it a systematic inspection, and it proved to hold many things of absorbing interest. Letters, wills, conveyances, certificates, marriage lines—I had got them fairly well sorted out and returned to the pigeon holes and drawers—excepting the largest assortment of all, a pile of rubbish, which was transferred to the nearest waste-paper basket.

I laid the portfolio open before me that hot afternoon, and determined to learn my lesson well. I wanted to get into my head a certain description contained in a Crown patent.

"All and singular that certain parcel of land and island contiguous to the western shore of Maunder County in Upper Canada"—

Dear me, what a hot day to be indoors!

I looked up through the high window into the waving billows of foliage outside. The low, soothing hum that is produced by myriads of insects' wings was musical. Yes, too hot, too enjoyably hot and drowsy to be studying indoors! I rose deliberately, put away the portfolio, went out into the garden, sought out a shady spot, planted a willow chair firmly, and sank into it. I did not go to sleep, neither shall I say that I dreamed. I just smoked and reflected.

Youth is hopeful, and I was young—as young as a man of 26 can be after the dread experience of war. I was so hopeful as to be quite confident of success. Success lay before me and I believed I had only to seize it. Little did I suppose that many difficulties must first be overcome. There was the gold, I would go and find it, and be rich. There was the greater treasure of a woman's love, I would go and claim it, and be happy. The gold first, the girl afterwards. Of course there was no doubt about the gold; Fortune had withheld it from others a hundred years and more to shower it now into the hands of her favourite. And as for the girl—I would take the gold and turn to her with full hands. And if not—well I would never go to her empty handed.

She would take me rich, of course. Would she take me poor? I had never thought about it before. Let me think about it now, and decide. Bring forth the evidence and review it.

A hospital bed and many pillows. I lay mostly

in the pillows, or rather in the dressings of my wounds. My eyes were turned to an approaching orderly. Was it a cablegram he held for me? How could I, knowing my mother was very ill, bear to read it? So Katherine came and read it to me. I begged her to read it again and again, for I could not understand. She went away, and when she came back again I ventured to ask for confirmation.

"My mother has died?"

"Oh, now you understand?"—in the softest tones. "My poor boy, I'm so sorry!"

That was all. I mean it was all she said. But next day I saw her looking with a tenderness no words could equal. So much so that I said, when I got the chance:—

"Thank you so much, sister, for your sympathy."

That was evidence worth reviewing.

Then there was the good-bye. I was completely recovered and "returned to duty." I went to say good-bye, as cheerfully as I knew how. At my words she paled visibly and dropped her eyes, struggling to be composed.

This also was sweet to recall and to ponder.

Then there were the letters. I rolled over in my chair and drew them out of my pocket—that is, the two important ones, the first and the latest. On the envelope of one I read, for the hundredth time:—

"Lieut. Richard Mortimer, —th Battery, Canadian Field Artillery, France."

And inside:

Lothian Terrace, Edinburgh.

"Dear Mr. Mortimer:

We were all so sorry to lose you. You were splendid about it—you all are. Thanks for the flowers—did you mean me to distribute them, for you sent such a box-full? I can't do it, anyhow—I am keeping all of them for myself!

Yours sincerely,

KATHERINE DUNBAR."

The other envelope bore this inscription:

"Capt. R. Mortimer, D.S.O., etc., Montreal, Canada."

Its contents:

"Dear Captain Mortimer:

I am just now starting for home, and oh, how my heart aches to be there! It is our suite at the St. Lawrence, Winnipeg, where I hope, some day, you will call on us. I shall travel via New York and Chicago. Will you watch for the Roumania's arrival?

KATHERINE DUNBAR."

So I read these two letters again, as though they had just been received, as diligently as though they held a meaning that was hard to catch.

Katherine used to walk with me, at Portobello, as near to the sea as we were allowed to go, and on one occasion we were out of bounds after hours and both reprimanded. The incident was often referred to, and never to be forgotten.

Yes, I believed Katherine would take me poor. But I would go to her rich.

About nine o'clock that evening Dr. Bernard's car turned in from the road and crept into the gateway. After a quiet smoke together on the screened south porch I took him into the library. He said no more to me about Katherine Dunbar, for which I was glad, but having already taken him into my confidence concerning the other matter I was eager to tell him more of it.

I put on the lights, opened the safe and took out a wonderful packet. The contents, Wilton Mortimer's will, the title deed to Station Island, and a letter, I spread out for Dr. Bernard's perusal. He adjusted his spectacles and began seriously to consider them, expressing his surprise at the possession by my family of an island, for he had never heard any of us speak of it.

"Where is it?" he asked.

"In Lake Huron," I replied, "as the surveyor's description attached shows."

"Yes, I see. But this bears the name of 'Richard Mortimer.' What does that mean?"

"That is my grandfather."

"Oh, I see. Your grandfather. But take care, Dick! Are you sure the island is yours now? Your father's name does not appear. You see your grandfather may have sold it."

"Oh, no. I've already established my ownership, doctor."

"Have you? That is very satisfactory. And

do you suppose that this is the place where your great-grandfather hid his gold?"

"Yes."

"Well, what I don't see, Dick," said the doctor, "is how you learn from these papers that gold was in question at all."

"But you haven't seen them all yet," I replied. "Now read this letter."

I indicated the remarkable document which I had come across only the evening before, a letter, probably overlooked for two generations before mine. It was a creased sheet of hand-made paper, very brown with age and spotted with mildew. But the good old ink, written upon it in a bold hand, doubtless from a goose-quill pen, was indelibly clear. This is what my visitor read aloud, pronouncing it, not as written, but according to modern spelling:

Detroit, Aug. 8th, 1799.

Dear Sir:

A man, named Paully, has arrived here from Sault Ste. Marie, having come, in the first place, from Michillimackinac, and he gives an account of the death of Mr. Wilton Mortimer at the latter place. It was, as was supposed by his widow, a violent death at the hands of his enemies. May I request that you inform her of the occurrence as you shall think fit to do so. Mr. Mortimer was believed to have obtained a quantity of gold from a northern nation, and he was secretly bringing it down the Lakes when he met with his untimely end. Some Indians, however, must have had their suspicions and followed him with evil intentions. Several Wyandots started from Sault Ste. Marie after him.

They lost him on the way and arrived at Michillimackinac before him. When he landed, being alone, they stabbed him to death near to the Fort. In his boat they found nothing but bags of sand. The man Paully says that is all he knows except that Mr. Mortimer was given decent burial by the Priest.

I am, Sir, with great respect,

Yours very sincerely,

EDWARD STEWART.

Colonel Herbert,
Montreal.

The old man, his glasses quivering on his nose, scrutinized this letter with care, touching it with reverent fingers. He read it over with many exclamations of surprise, and I hung over him no less excited, impatiently waiting for his opinion.

"Richard! Richard!" he cried, taking hold of me, "This is a wonderful find. But, oh, I wonder if it is genuine!"

"Genuine? Why, do you suppose I forged it?" I replied.

"Ah, no, Dick! But have you considered it thoroughly from every point of view?"

"Yes, of course I have," said I.

"And you really think that if you go to that island after all this time you will find something worth going for?"

"I do."

"Ah, be cautious! Don't expect too much. Don't go to much expense over it, and don't wear yourself out over it."

"I do not know what I shall do until I get

there, doctor," I said, "and certainly I intend to be cautious."

"You think you have sufficient to go upon. But it might only be a 'wild-goose chase.' Why should this be the place that your ancestor buried his gold on?"

"Because he owned it," I said triumphantly.

"Oh, but there's no proof of that," he still objected.

"Well, there's moral certainty. If not, how did my grandfather, Richard, get it? I'm sure he never bought a lonely island in Lake Huron when he lived always in Montreal."

"Very well, Dick," the doctor went on, "Even so, what about the gold? Unless the story is a myth, where did it come from in the first place? Was there a mine somewhere in the north? Did Wilton Mortimer come by it honestly?—You know traders were not always scrupulously honest.—I think that the greatest factor in determining the truth of your expectations is the origin of the gold—the possible origin of it."

"You are suggesting," I replied, "that there was no gold in those days. Why, when I went hunting, east of the Lake of the Woods, I had good reason for believing that the Indians always had gold—lots of it. We talked to an old Indian once who told us that his people used to know of gold deposits and silver deposits too, but that the places are now mostly forgotten."

"Never be too credulous," said the doctor. "Look at this letter again. According to what it

says, a sort of second-hand story comes down to somebody in Detroit who believes it and writes it down, as it sounded to him, for the benefit of some interested person in Montreal. After the lapse of more than a hundred years you propose to act upon the information in that letter. You inherit, unexpectedly, an island in Lake Huron, and although it is not even mentioned, you believe that the lost gold is there—no one else having been to get it. You are going to some expense and to some labour to dig up every foot of that island.—Ah, Richard, it is no small undertaking."

"It is quite the kind of work I am ready for," I replied with warmth. "Listen to my version of the story. As to the origin of the gold I am perfectly ignorant, nor do I know if it is in ore or ingots or what condition it is in. I do know that my great-grandfather was murdered by several Indians although he was a friend of the Indians, and murder requires a strong motive. The murderers left the Sault after him and reached Mackinaw Island before him. As the letter shows, he was a long time on the way. I picture him taking his precious cargo, all alone, to his own island, and after burying it there turning his little ship westward and landing, still all alone, on the historic island that has seen so many tragedies. He secures his boat at the landing stage, and ascends the slopes to the fort, passing through the trees. They have seen him coming, after a long wait, and are in ambush. Suddenly his enemies pounce on him, and while one fells him with a club

the others use their knives. Poor man! Doctor, I almost feel vengeful about it, and that is wrong. But I have another feeling also. I feel that I owe it to his memory to recover what he lost."

"Dick," said Dr. Bernard, "it is a very moving story, as you tell it. It is indeed. And you are quite right about it. If no one has taken the matter up before, then it is certainly your duty to go to the island, and, if possible, learn more about the gold, or whatever it was, that poor old Wilton Mortimer tried to bring down from the wilds."

"There! Doctor," said I, "Now you are changing your tune, and I'm grateful to you. If you try to dissuade me it will be useless. You do better to encourage me. I am determined to go—there is adventure in it. It promises some fun. There is the possibility—to me the certainty—of finding a great reward. Then also I seem to have acquired new property. This island is something I never knew about. My father never knew that he had inherited it, so far as I can judge. Now that I have got hold of it I ought to go and see it. Therefore, all things considered, it is my duty."

"Quite so," agreed Dr. Bernard, "It is your duty to go to the island and make some sort of a search. Make a search such as will satisfy you. If you do not over-exert yourself the outing will benefit your health. But beware of one thing: do not become too intent upon it. There is a dreadful disease that miners and others are a prey to—it is the lust for gold. Beware of it. If you feel the passion coming on come home at once and en-

gage in some other occupation. I do not wish to dissuade you, Dick—far from it. I want to encourage you. I only spoke as I did at first in order to steady you a bit. Caution and calmness are necessary to a sound opinion. Just go with the light-hearted intention of looking around, bearing in mind the probability that someone else may have been before you.—By the way, is it far out, or is it easy to reach?"

"I believe," said I, "that it is easy to reach. It is not far from Baubee Bay, a summer resort, and that is the place I shall make for. From Baubee Bay I can go out in a yacht. I expect to find it a very desirable island for some natural reason. Perhaps it has a natural harbour or perhaps it has a cave that affords good shelter. I wonder why it is called Station Island?"

"Station Island," said the doctor, for all his warnings evidently deeply interested, "Why, no doubt it has been a station of some kind. Perhaps the French had a military post there. After the Conquest of Canada English garrisons occupied little forts and stations all over the country. They tried to link up the back-woods with the frontiers of civilization. Schooners and other large vessels began to appear in numbers on the Great Lakes. Well, now I must go. Let me know how you get on."

He gave me some final advice about my health and departed. I put away the valuable papers and soon went to bed. The excitement, the summer heat, and the state of my nerves would not

permit me to sleep soundly, and towards morning I dreamed. Katherine, in her white costume, was bending over me in distress and saying, "For my sake, Dick, for my sake!" Alas, some dreams come true!

CHAPTER II

MY LONELY SEARCH FOR HEALTH AND TREASURE

EIGHTEEN hours in trains sickened me of railways. I wished I had a good car so that I could have been independent of fellow-travellers, porters, time-tables, and above all, of sleeping berths. I like fellow-travellers well enough, there is comradeship with those making for the same destination as yourself. On this occasion, however, I instinctively avoided companions. I dreaded to see someone come lurching along the car to cry out, "Hello! Mortimer! Where are you going? What are you doing?" I took a chair in the smoking-room at first, and furtively I peeped over the top edge of my newspaper at every other man in the car. I knew none of them—I hoped none of them knew me. There were ladies in the next car through which I must pass to the dining car, and it would be possible for a whole bevy of them to rise up and say, "Oh, Dick! Where are you going?" Happily none of them did so. And yet, had any acquaintance claimed me, it would not have mattered in the least. I told myself that. It was just the wretched state of my nerves that made me so unnecessarily apprehensive. The day passed and the night

passed. Next morning I left the main line after breakfast, and after a tiresome wait at the junction, took the local train for Baubee Bay. Three hours brought me to the end of my journey—at least it brought me to the small station of that name. As I stepped out and walked along the platform I became aware of an absence of clamouring hotel men. A pile of milk cans buzzed with flies, a bright looking youth, with an official cap on his head, was examining express parcels thrown out from the now departing train. I liked the look of that young station-agent in his white ducks. Trying to be equal to the situation:

"How do you do?" I began.

"How are you?" he responded, looking up.

These enquiries being ignored by both of us, I then said:

"This is Baubee Bay is it not?"

"This is only the station," he replied seriously.

I looked quickly at the train board, where the name appeared. I pointed to it.

"Baubee Bay," I read aloud. He laughed frankly.

"Sure," he acknowledged. "This is the station for Baubee Bay."

I was not quite sure if he was making fun of me. I turned and looked at the landscape. Wooded hills appeared on every hand.

"Well, where is the bay?" I asked, a little puzzled.

"It's four miles," he said.

"Oh, I understand," I said. "But I did not see any bus or carriage of any kind when I got off the

train. How do people get there? Perhaps I am mistaken in supposing there is a village at all?''

''No, sir, there is no village. Of course there's lots of people in the summer. Are you going there?''

''I would like to do so,'' I confessed. ''Is there no hotel or boarding-house for visitors?''

''Yes, there's a hotel, but they don't meet the trains unless they know of someone coming. All the people that stay at the hotel engage their rooms before they come. But I'll telephone, if you like, and they'll run out and get you.''

I requested him to do as he offered, relieved to know that some kind of a shelter might be found. In about fifteen minutes a car arrived. The driver was a brown man with black hair and bright eyes. He took my two suit-cases and hand-bag.

''These all you have?'' he asked in a quiet way.

His face was expressionless. ''Indian,'' I said to myself.

''What is the name of your hotel?'' I asked, merely for something to say. Twice I asked the question.

''You mean the Chateau Royal?''

''Chateau Royal? That sounds rather fine,'' I laughed, wondering how the proprietors settled on such a pretentious name.

In a few minutes I had a surprise. We passed between pillars into an avenue of trees, and whirling in a big sweep drew up before an imposing white portico. Broad lawns stretched down to the shining lake, a broad verandah spanned the

front of the house. Guests in summer attire moved gaily here and there. A bell boy had taken my possessions before I stirred from my seat. I saw that I had come to a first-class establishment. As I stepped across the wide verandah I could not but notice beautiful girls and handsome men. What a lovely place! The swinging screen doors let me into the hall—a ball room, rather. At one end a rubble stone fire-place with a massive wood mantel-piece caught my eye. Groups of deep luxurious wicker chairs, here and there, reflected in the polished oak floor. I approached the office, where a clerk looked wonderingly at me.

"Can I have a room here?" I began. He spun his book around.

"We were not expecting you, were we?" he said.

"No. I would like to engage a room now, if I can, for a few days. What are the rates?"

He looked at me again.

"The rates are thirty-five dollars a week. We usually require an introduction, Sir. Have you anything you can show me?"

Much humbled I showed him my traveller's cheques. He was satisfied and I was soon being escorted up carpeted stairs to the floor above. The building was extensive and of one storey. The porter led me into a delightful little room. When he had finished his unnecessary inspection of the faucets in the little bathroom adjoining, and had brought me ice-water, I gave him a dollar.

"How many guests are there here?" I enquired.

"In this house, Sir?"

"Yes, in this house. Where else would I mean?"

"I thought you might mean in the park altogether, Sir."

"In the park? What is that?"

"Well, there are ten cottages in the grounds, Sir. Then the Chateau holds about two hundred people. I don't know how many there are here."

"And are there no other cottages or hotels here?"

"No, Sir."

"What a select place! Say, is this place called Baubee Bay?"

"Yes, Sir," said the rather astonished boy.

"That is all."

He vanished. I sat down in a comfortable chair and looked round me.

"Thirty-five dollars a week!" I said aloud. And I whistled.

After a thorough toilet, feeling much refreshed, I descended to luncheon, that meal being nearly over for it was almost two o'clock. A few belated people were there, laughing uproariously. They ignored me and I felt free to stare about me. The room was long and well lighted from windows on two sides. Through the windows on the west side I looked on the lake, which appeared to be full of pleasure craft, launches and canoes. The trees interrupted the view too much to take in the whole scene, so I made haste to get outside. A French waiter served me with an inviting array of good

things to which I did full justice. Then, with a good cigar lighted, I went and stood on the porch. A smooth lawn, broken by a mass of flowering shrubs, stretched to the water's edge. A stone landing-stage or pier was built out for a great distance, and at the far end of it were several boat-houses. I walked along the dock to the end, where I had a good view of the bay. It was almost land-locked but the entrance was seen about a mile away. Beyond the gap were islands. I gasped. Station Island, there! I must take a trip immediately. So I spoke to a man who seemed to be in charge of things.

"Can I engage a motor launch?"

"The launches are engaged for to-day, Sir."

"The let me have a canoe if you can."

"Yes, I can do that. Ted, give this gentleman a canoe."

A younger lad lifted a beautiful thing off its rack and slid it down to the lapping water.

"This is a fine bay, is it not?" I remarked to the boatman.

"It used to be, Sir, but it's getting too shallow. The water is lower every year. You never been here before?"

"No, I have never been here before," I acknowledged.

"Well, you don't know what this bay used to be like. Steamers from the ports in the Sound used to call here, there was so much water. But the bottom has filled up and nothing could get through the gap. Why even the boats here touch

bottom in places. I've had to go off to the north there to fetch people off the sand ever so many times. They built this dock just to get out into water."

"This shallow water makes it a delightful place for bathers," I said, watching a riotous group splashing the liquid silver in the sun.

"Yes, that's right," said my informant," especially for the children."

"How long has the Chateau been built?" I asked.

"Oh, about eight or nine years."

What I wanted to know was whether or not the bay had been frequented much in the past. I was jealous of the presence of spying tourists and campers. My canoe in the meantime was bouncing on the water at the end of the line by which it was tied.

"And were there no cottages here before that time?" was my next question.

"Why, certainly, there were always cottages here. But the Chateau Company bought them all. All the shore all the way round belongs to the Chateau. No private person can come in here and build a shack. Now, that's what I call a monopoly."

"Yes, that is a monopoly," I replied, laughing, " and where do you live yourself?"

"I live in the Chateau in the summer. But I have a farm a mile away from here. My son works it."

"Well, I must be off for a paddle. There are islands just outside the bay aren't there?"

"Yes, sir. That's an island there, though it's hard to see from here where it begins. Then there is another just outside the bay. That makes a breakwater and the water never washes in here as it should."

Now I came to my question.

"Which is Station Island?"

"Station Island? Well, Station Island is six miles out. You had better not go there in a canoe."

"Is there good fishing at Station Island?"

"Well, Sir, nobody ever goes there. There is a wreck close to the island and there should be Black Bass. You need a dinghy for fishing out there. The water gets rough and the rocks are bad."

"I wonder," said I, "if you could let me have a gasoline launch to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, I can let you have a small boat. What time?"

"Early. Say seven o'clock."

"Very well, Sir."

I stepped into the canoe and pushed off. At first it seemed strange to be canoeing, but soon I was quite at ease. For four years I had had no practice but I enjoyed myself immensely. I made straight for the entrance to the bay, which was at least a mile distant. As I drew near to the first island the view of the gap widened, and the channel was plainly seen. Into that channel I darted.

continually looking forward for a glimpse of Station Island, my own. A large launch, full of people, travelling very swiftly, passed me, making a dangerous swell, and making waves crash on either shore. I was too much engaged turning head-on to look at them. Only I felt like a pedestrian on a dusty road when a huge seven-seater automobile roars by him in a cloud. As I got beyond the first island I saw the next one blocking the way. Station Island could not be seen until the open lake was reached. Encircling this second island, which was very extensive, I gradually viewed what I had come to see. A small but high piece of rock, it looked like. The sides near the water were grey, as though of granite, and the interior was a mass of trees, all the beautiful shades of verdure of early summer.

"That island is mine," I said to myself. "My great-grandfather got it by squatter's right, and on it he hid the gold he brought from the North Shore. I am going to-morrow to get it, for it is my inheritance."

I turned back to the gap, my ardour greater than ever before. For two more hours I paddled aimlessly round the beautiful bay, always avoiding the other craft. It was nearly six o'clock when I returned to the dock. There were scores of people around the landing-steps in all kinds of boats, launches and yachts. But I managed to get another word with the man in charge of the boat-houses. Could he let me have some fishing tackle? Yes, he would have a rod and line ready

for me in the morning, also he would get me some good minnows. My excuse for going out was obvious. I was going for Black Bass. I needed another implement, however, and coming back to the beautiful grounds of the Chateau I sought a gardener. The sound of a lawn-mower drew me towards a distant quarter of the park. A pony-drawn machine was being backed into its shed by the time I reached it.

"Do you keep your tools in there?" I asked the driver. The man completed the task of housing the lawn-mower before he replied.

"What did you say, Sir?"

"I said, 'Do you keep your tools in there?' I want to borrow a trowel."

There were spades and other things close at hand. I picked up a trowel.

"This is what I want," I said, offering no explanation as to what for. "Just let me have this till to-morrow."

On receiving a fifty-cent piece he made no objection to letting me take it, and off I went. It had to be thrust out of sight into my pocket, dirty though it was. I conveyed it directly to my room in the Chateau. On the way I had a sudden misgiving. Turning aside to the office I spoke to the clerk.

"By the way, do we dress for dinner?"

"Only the ladies, Sir."

"What time is dinner?"

"Seven o'clock."

I went up to my room and changed into a dark suit before that hour, for all that. A bath and a

change of raiment has a rejuvenating effect in the evening. The trowel was perhaps a small instrument for my purpose, but I feared to attract attention by going fishing with a spade. If a spade, and even a pick-axe, were necessary I would find out next day. For preliminary search I would compel myself to be content with a trowel.

The gong sounded, and I went down to dinner. I was placed at a table where two men were already seated. The people were trooping in—a chattering, laughing crowd, filling the room with their merry din. They were apparently in family parties, and each party seemed to have a table to itself. One large party, a dozen or so, of all ages, gathered round a big table next to mine. I turned and watched them, perhaps a little too boldly. At any rate they noticed me and drew each other's attention to me. At this I felt myself turning red, and I looked in another direction. Then, being accosted by a waiter, I began an excellent dinner. In fact my visit to Baubee Bay and to the Chateau Royal was beneficial to my health from the moment of arrival. I devoured good food with an appetite I had not had for many a day. The two men at the table with me were very pleasant, and exchanged a few words with me. They were father and son, and the son was obviously unwell. The elder man was of striking appearance in face and figure, and if his features indicated anything it was benignity. No sick man likes to be paraded as such, but the young man was on a prescribed diet and his con-

dition could not be concealed. But the father was ready to take the blame or the shame himself.

"My son and I are recuperating after a hard term in college," he said, "In a few days we will be as fit as wildcats, won't we, Arthur?"

"I am feeling fine already," said the boy, blushing until he was as strikingly handsome as his father.

Once more I looked towards the table of the large party. They were very happy. Two girls with flashing eyes made me look again. Yes, they were pretty, but no doubt they were proud. The matron of the circle sat erect and smiled at their pleasantries. The paterfamilias talked in a deep vibrant voice. Soon my own companions rose and left me, and the meal was nearly over. Then the elderly man rose from the neighbouring table, and, to my astonishment, came over to me. At the same time the others rose and moved away.

"I wish to apologize to you, Sir," said the man.

"Apologize? What for?" I exclaimed, getting up myself.

"For swamping you this afternoon in the gap. We were so hilarious that I fear we were very neglectful."

"Oh, you were in the launch coming into the bay? I did not know you again," I said, "In fact I did not look at you at all till you were past."

"Of course not. You were too much engaged saving yourself from ship-wreck. We are very sorry for treating you like that."

"Please think no more of it," I replied, "I had almost forgotten about it."

We moved towards the door together and exchanged cards. Then quite naturally we passed out to the porch, sat down, smoked, spent an hour together. About nine o'clock an orchestra began to play in the ball-room. It was a signal for a general rush indoors and dancing began.

"Do you dance, Captain Mortimer?"

"Yes, I am fond of dancing."

"Then take in my daughter, Elsie, will you? Here she is."

So in a moment I was capering across the floor with a partner. I had intended to avoid everybody, to retire early, and here I was, making friends and making merry with them, till after eleven. At last, however, I reached my bedroom and went to bed, having left orders to be called at six o'clock.

At six, then, I got up. In half an hour I had a solitary breakfast in the great dining-room, during which a lunch-basket was being prepared for me. By seven I stood at the end of the dock and marvelled on the beauty of the morning. Was this to be a very wonderful day? Yes, it was, but it was to have much more excitement than I counted on.

"It's going to rain to-day, Sir," the boatman told me. No mere weather could affect me.

"I don't care," was my casual reply, as I stepped into the launch beside him. He looked sharply at me. Some day I would come and tell this

man about my expedition and also explain why I cared so little for the rod and line he provided for me. The engine was tested—it was running smoothly. When the man got out I tipped him a dollar, cranked the engine again, and was off.

"How long will you be?" he shouted.

"All day!" I roared back.

It was very hot and the air was still, except for the breeze created by the movement of the boat. She was not a very speedy vessel, and I did not get out of the bay for half an hour. Then I rounded the point of the larger island in the mouth of the bay, and swept into the open water. I had not seen a single soul except the hotel servants, and undoubtedly I was the first abroad of all the guests. The water was as calm as the proverbial mill-pond, and clear as only Lake Huron water can be. I could see the bottom for some distance out from shore. Then I noticed that the green deepened: I was getting suddenly beyond bathing depth. Station Island was half hidden in the haze that belongs to hot days. In an hour I was very close. A cliff of ten to twenty feet rose from the water, and through the clear depths I saw rocks rising, as it seemed, to crush my boat's bottom. With great care I avoided those submerged dangers, and also those which showed themselves above the surface. I encircled the island and found that the rocky sides were the same all round. Shutting down to the lowest speed I drew in closer, wondering how to effect a landing. I had no reason to wonder why it was

not frequented by guests at the Chateau. It was both dangerous to approach and almost impossible to land upon. No little bay or inlet could I discover. So I stopped the engine after two inspections all round, and drifted awhile, so that in a short time I was several hundred feet away.

"Well, here's my island," I said aloud to myself, filling my pipe, "but how am I to get ashore on it?"

When it suddenly occurred to me to look out for rocks, I glanced down into the water—to see the deck of a ship a few feet below me! I had forgotten about that wreck. Here I was right over it, evidently a schooner that had gone down in a storm years before. What a place for Black Bass if only I had time to give to them! I let the temptation pass, however, and indeed it required no effort. Starting the engine again I again approached the island, and going slowly, found that I was running in a safe channel where were no rocks. So I came nearer than ever before, and saw, to my joy, the way to land. A great fissure split the cliff from top to bottom, and continued down under water. I stopped the engine, and with the one short oar in the boat thrust her into the opening. Even after that it was very difficult. I got over the bow into the water, the end of the painter in my hand. I had to climb on hands and knees on a smooth surface that was almost perpendicular. No tree offered me its root or branch and no little hole received my clutching fingers. I slipped back and down so many times that it be-

came exhuasting, but never once did I think of giving up in despair. At length, with bleeding hands I grasped the top, and with sore knees I scrambled on to the level ground above.

"That, I believe," I said, to comfort myself, "is how William the Conqueror came ashore, getting England by handfuls."

I secured the rope to a small tree, which found difficulty in growing on that rock. The boat was in a natural dock between the two steep sides of the inlet. That was the place, I thought, where my ancestor, Wilton Mortimer, used to bring his own boat, and where he put her on his last fateful visit, as I believed, laden with gold. No storm could hurt a boat in such a protected spot. The rocks outside would keep off the heaviest water, and yet, a few feet away, a tempest might rage. All that was needed was a hanging ladder, securely fastened at the top. I was not prepared for such a need, but the rope with which the launch was tied would have to serve for that purpose.

I stood up and looked about me. The island was described as being twenty acres in extent, but I thought it was probably less than that estimate. The outside edge was fairly level and was bare of vegetation, as I found by walking all round. But the interior became more irregular and undulating as I went inwards. I was intensely interested in all I saw at every step. Did my foot strike a stone or loose stick I paused to look at it carefully. Except for the outside edge the trees seemed to grow in a dense mass, or so I supposed

at first. Pines, Spruce, Balsam and Cedars were the chief kinds, and they seemed determined to choke each other in competitive confusion. Then I came on what had once been a wide clearing. It had been a rectangular space of several acres and had been open on one side to the lake. Apple trees, planted there, had long since aged and died, but from their self-sown seed had sprung a thousand. Likewise small garden-fruit, currants, gooseberries, raspberries, now grew wild and wasted. Old fashioned flowers in degenrate forms mixed with patches of mint and potatoes. Scattered over the whole of this comparatively open space were forest trees of later growth. But the greatest feature of all of this tangled glade was a house, standing at the farther end. I say "a house," but that is only a generic term. I saw the white stone gables and the walls, and approaching nearer I crossed the low remains of a courtyard wall, now crumbled down by frost and rain. This building, whatever it was, was more than I had expected to find. In fact, although I had had no preconceived picture in my mind, the whole island was surprising me. Firstly, it was not in a group, but stood alone. Secondly, it was most difficult of access. Thirdly, it had been definitely inhabited at some time. Fourthly, the building was of a permanent material, that is to say, of stone. No doubt there was a story connected with this island that I had yet to hear. Was I not foolish not to have tried to learn more about it before I came? Now what did the name

mean? "Station" Island? Why "Station" Island? I was much perplexed. Who had lived here? Was it possible that anyone lived here when Wilton Mortimer owned it? It was possible, but it was not likely. Tradition said that he was a very bold and independent man. He sailed his pinnace single-handed on the Upper Lakes. He went alone for months among the Indians in the north. He must have bought this island for a safe retreat at times. No one could approach it in the day-time without being seen for miles. No one could land upon it except at one difficult spot, and at that landing-place one man might repel a hundred undesirable invaders.

The doorway of the house was laced across with a wild vine which proved, at least, that no one had for many a day passed in or out. I had to use my jack-knife to get through, which did not take a moment. I stood within the walls and looked about me in that roofless ruin. The floor seemed paved with roughly shaped slabs of stone, between the cracks of which grew grass and weeds. This floor, if such it was, had prevented the interior from becoming full of brush and trees The building, I could see, had had two floors, but not a piece of flooring or joist or window-frame could I find. At one end was a chimney, very wide, and with a tremendously thick wall. Yet it had not stood the test of time as well as most of the stone-work. The outer wall of the chimney, built right in the gable end, had fallen out, and so a kind of deep low doorway was formed just there.

It had been a great wide hearth some dead-and-gone pioneers of early days had gathered round. But, once again, why? Had people ever lived here in the winter, cut off, as they would be, from the mainland? I could not tell. All I could be sure of was the house, some forty-feet by twenty, one storey high, a solid structure, fit at one time, so it seemed, to live in all the year round.

Long afterwards I found out more about it, and everything upon it. It had, first of all, been used by the French as an outpost, chosen for its peculiar advantages as a natural stronghold. Jesuit missionaries, early in the 18th century had established a house upon it. It is not known whether the present ruin was the mission house or if the soldiers built it. It is most likely that the missionaries built it, and also were responsible for the garden. From the island they set out on expeditions to Indian villages on the mainland, and here on this island all the open months of summer they were in touch with civilization through vessels plying to and fro. But when, under the British regime routes of travel changed, and the Indian war broke out, then the missionaries had no further use for the place. Years afterwards they sold it, abandoned, neglected, ruined, to a trader, Wilton Mortimer, and I am sure he bought it cheaply. But when I first visited it, that hot summer day, I was only concerned to find out if its value to me was very great. I truly believed it was.

"Where shall I begin?" The trowel in my pocket was banging against my side as I walked, reminding me of its presence. I took it out and held it in my hand, regretting that it was so small. Now, under the chimney was a heap of ashes. When I kicked aside the grass a snake crawled out, and I stamped it to death. It was in so doing I saw the ashes. In the course of time they had become a fertile soil and overgrown. I walked out of the house, or to be more correct, I scrambled out and got back to the one path on which it was possible to walk on that island. That is to say I returned to the edge and began to walk along the cliff. Suddenly I stood stock-still. About the place where the wreck was, a boat lay, and in it were two men fishing. With the instinct of a soldier I remained motionless for a minute, when being assured that they had not seen me, I took cover, and from behind a boulder examined them at leisure. They were about three hundred feet off shore and anchored to the old wreck. For some time I watched them with some vague suspicion that their presence boded no good. Had they followed me on purpose? That seemed quite possible, if they came from Baubee Bay. Soon I recognized them and the recognition did not allay my fears. They were the two men, father and son, who had sat at the table with me the previous evening. They were having great sport for I saw them take two fishes each in a short time. Then I thought I would go on with my own business. What was the good of thinking two harmless

sportsmen, one of them an invalid, would wish to hinder me doing as I wished on my own island? I got up, therefore, and went all the way back to the ruin. I ought not to waste time. I came to the island with the avowed intention of searching for buried treasure. Let me, therefore, stick to that intention. Without much thought about the likeliness of the place I began scraping the ashes under the chimney with my trowel.

My brother, who joined the Dublin Fusiliers and was killed at the Gallipoli first landing, was engaged to a New York girl. From his body was taken a locket that contained two tiny photographs, one of his fiancee and the other of our mother. I got possession of that locket at a department of the Red Cross in London, and I carried it to the end of my stay in Europe, intending when I got back, to give it to the girl he would have married had he lived. She, however, generously asked me to keep it, and I continued to carry it about with me. I put it into my pocket that morning with my watch. Pausing to see what time it was I now found, to my dismay, that I had lost my watch and the locket attached to it. I was not wearing a vest—it had been in my fob pocket. Where could it be? I jumped up and began to look for it. And to this incident I owe a good deal.

When something small has been lost, by far the best plan is to spend time thinking of likely places before hunting for it. If I had done that I would have remembered my hard climb up that

steep rock, and have gone there directly. Instead of that, I plunged into the tangled garden, bending double. So I went where I had not been before, and found the well. The well had a stone lining or curb, and must have been dug with great difficulty on account of the rocks. When I found it I knew I was off my trail, and just noting the fact mentally that it was a well, I moved on. I did not stop to remark that it was strange how it was nearly filled in with stones. No, I remembered my landing and my scrambling up from the boat, and hurried there. The sky was now sunless and overcast. An ominous rumble in the north foretold rain. Still the wind was not up, the water as calm as in early morning.

My lost watch was lying, ticking bravely, on the top of the bank where I had landed. The locket was not there—it had been broken off the chain. Surely it was below in the water! Lying face downwards I leaned over and looked down into that little basin, half filled by my launch, and peered into the water. Something gleamed down there. Pulling off my clothes I slid easily down into the water. It was not more than knee deep where I stood. Reaching down to the locket I grasped—the thing I sought—and a piece of iron. It was black and slimy like the bottom from which I took it. I threw it up on to the top of the cliff, took my lunch basket out of the boat, and hanging it on my arm, pulled myself up to the top. Having dressed, I ate some sandwiches and quenched my thirst from a thermos bottle. The men in the

boat, who could not see me, were also making a repast. They were in exactly the same place.

After my lunch I picked up the iron I had thrown out of the water. It was encrusted with a deposit that had preserved it to some extent. It was a handle and must have been on a chest. Again I looked down into the little harbour. Was it possible Mr. Wilton Mortimer had hidden a chest down there? Perhaps. I could not begin to examine those muddy depths at present. But I would bear them in mind. Just for the present I must go back to my fireplace. And back I went.

It was really a terribly hot day. The perspiration poured from me as I scooped ashes out, and made a hole, three feet deep.

I think that nothing, except what I had in view, could have induced me to engage in such labour. I had left home, however, with the two-fold intention of seeking health and treasure. As to the former I felt that I was finding it, hourly, but as to the latter, it might prove to be more elusive.

CHAPTER III

THE JESUIT MISSION AND THE BURIED SAFE.

I DID not know that the ruin where I scratched for gold was the outpost of early Christian missionaries. Neither did I know that Wilton was a man of good faith. If I had known those two things I would not have been surprised at finding beads and a crucifix. Good Catholics do not cast sacred things into the fire. Yet what was that hard black object? The grey soil I was scraping was a bed of ashes, easy to work with my trowel. Like a badger I loosened a little, and then with one hand cupped to the trowel threw a quantity over my shoulder as I knelt. My tool clinked against the Figure that had once been attached to a wooden cross. As I lifted it out I saw what it was in a moment. It was of silver, black with corrosion. I carried it to my boat and dropped it down on the cushion, hurrying back immediately to my work under the chimney. I found several nails—queer, hand-made spikes. Perhaps they had been burnt in old lumber, used as fuel. Then I found the rosary. It was a string of marble or agate beads fastened together by silver links.

After that I began to take out stones, some as

big as a man's head. They were very hard to remove, but the removal of each left so large a hole I felt rewarded. Oh, for a spade! The ashes soon gave place to real soil at three feet down. At five the loose stones were succeeded by rectangular ones, like those that composed the building itself. Of course I had reached the foundations. Rather discouraged I sat still awhile and pondered. Then I returned again to my labour. Somehow I would remove one of those stones, and I began to clear away the soil around a slab of a surface a foot square. Prying its edge all round with my trowel seemed useless at first. Oh, for a spade! Presently, to reward patience and sore fingers, it moved, it gave a little. Then I persuaded it to stick up one acute corner. Splendid! Now I could get hold with my hands. Up it came, a hundred pounds at least. And now, what is there beneath? Just a little more debris? Something that rings with a different sound, anyhow. It is iron! Plainly to be seen were the rounded heads of bolts, so thick in the plate, only about three inches apart each way. This must be a strong-box. It would be necessary to remove many stones before I could get at it. So I worked hard at another and then at another. In one hour more I could, perhaps—boom—boom! Thunder. Why, surely it was raining, and I had not noticed it. In any case I had long been wet through with perspiration, and the rain would be cooling and refreshing. But what about those men in their boat, fishing over the wreck only a hundred yards from the island?

They must have gone home—I would look out and see if they had done so. So I went and peered through the tangled apple trees. Why, they were still there, rods and lines still in use, fishing in the seething water. I was annoyed by their presence. They would be seeking refuge on the island soon. They would find my cove and launch, and I would have to invent a plausible reason for being there myself. I could say I had been fishing from the edge of the rocks on the other side of the island. I looked at my watch. It was three o'clock. They had been there several hours and my excuse would be foolish if I had no fish to show. Ah, well, I need not worry for the rain was nearly over, it was just a shower. Looking up I saw blue sky. My unwelcome guests were not coming any nearer so long as the weather did not actually drive them in. Back to my treasure seeking.

The inevitable happened. I went back to the excavation and redoubled my efforts. I took out more of the hewn stones. The foundations of the house were very massive, and while the stones were only roughly hewn they were none the less carefully fitted together. They locked each other so tightly that I found I needed a crowbar in order to make real progress. It was painfully slow work with a garden trowel and finger-nails. The trowel was bending and might break—my finger-nails were already broken. Yet I had, in a few hours, laid bare to view the top of an iron chest about two feet square. How thoroughly well—

how ideally—old Wilton Mortimer had concealed it. He had removed the foundation stones, buried his box, and replaced the stones. But he had surely made a mistake in not replacing the hearth stones over them. I would not have dug out the hearth if I had found it paved with slabs of stone, like the floor of the house. And yet, on reflection, if I had known nothing about Wilton Mortimer and the Indians I would never have suspected the presence of treasure for such a reason. Nor would any other man. Ah! What was that? A voice calling? No. Let me try another stone. But there it was again! Horrors—intruders!

"Hello—o—o! Oi—oi—oi—oi!"

What a yell! What a self-confident, impudent yell! At first I was inclined to lie low, but remembering my boat, which must have proved my presence to the fishermen, I got up and went out, in no hospitable mood. Making my way towards the head of the cliff nearest to me, which was at the foot of the old garden, I peered through the bushes towards the water. I did this before I replied to the shouting. What met my gaze drew me swiftly from cover. The launch, which I had thought was secure and unseen in the natural basin between the rocks, was now out on the open water. A wind was blowing and the water was becoming much disturbed. The two men in the boat were holding the launch alongside, having caught it, as they afterwards told me. At first I thought they had taken it out deliberately.

"What are you doing with that launch?" I roared.

They saw me, then. The father stood up, a majestic figure. He waved his hand towards the place where the launch had been.

"Is this your boat, Sir?" he enquired.

"Yes, it is my boat," I replied sharply.

"Then we shall have the great pleasure of returning it to you," he said in a rich voice that silenced all the bear in me.

They were free from their anchorage, and drifting slowly nearer land. They took out their oars and began to tow the launch.

"Be careful there!" I called, "You can't come straight. Bear off to the east a little. Can you see the channel?—Now turn south.—Do you see the opening?—Come right for me now."

So I directed them, so I showed them the channel that otherwise could only be found in perfectly calm water. I gave away all the secrets I held so precious, and I told them to look and see the basin in the cleft in the rock. What else could I have done? If I had not told them how to return to me the boat I would have been left on the island without means of escape. Then the next thing was to get down into the water and receive it from them. That meant a little swim. Tearing off my boots I dived off the edge of the cliff into deep water and swam out to the two boats. Reaching the stern of the launch I climbed into her. Then they let go.

"Thank you," I said. Could I have been more

effusive, since they had not explained how they came to have possession of the launch?

"We are only too pleased to help you," said the older man.

"I don't understand what had happened," I said, trying to be stern.

"Neither do we. Are you not the gentleman who had dinner at our table last night?"

"Yes. My name is Mortimer. I recognized you immediately," I said, "but perhaps my own guise at present gives me a queer appearance. I do not understand what happened?" I repeated interrogatively.

The younger man replied.

"Mr. Mortimer? Our name is Campion. Do you not know what happened to your launch? We only know that we saw her drifting. We have been fishing for hours just over there. I suppose we were not looking round much. We did not either see or hear you come. The first we knew of the presence of anybody besides ourselves out here was when this launch nearly bumped into us. It broke loose I suppose. Where did you get on that island?"—for he had not noticed the opening yet. "Everybody at the Chateau says there is no place to land on it."

"Oh, the place is right here," I said, wishing to say farewell, now, to my helpful but unwelcome visitors—"Hello, what is this?"

I was hauling in the rope by which the launch had been tied, and on the end of it was the young tree still fastened, roots and all. That little cedar

had not been very deeply rooted. It had torn out by the strain put upon it. The weight of myself climbing up and down on that rope had been too much for the mooring. Then, when the motion of the water began to sway the launch, it had gradually jerked free. That was how and why I was compelled to have intercourse with the Campions.

"Have you been fishing, Mr. Mortimer?" asked the elder man.

"Well, no, I have not begun yet," I replied. "In fact I don't think I will now."

"Ah, perhaps you've been too much interested in exploring this wonderful island. It is a remarkable formation. I must come and give it an examination another time." What downright impertinence!

"You must be a bold navigator, Sir," said the son. "The rocks all round are so bad. I don't know how you found your way in here."

"The fishing from that cliff should be worth while," said his father. "Why it is a perfectly ideal place for bass. You must not leave it without one throw. Aren't you going to try? Perhaps you feel like us, though—as if you ought to be going home—with this storm coming on?"

"Oh, I am not coming yet," I replied, paddling through the opening into the basin.

"Look out, Dad! We're on a rock!" cried the younger man. A peal of thunder almost drowned his voice. The storm was returning.

"We had better be off home, Arthur," the other replied, "in a little while it may be dangerous out here. My conscience!"

A thunder-bolt seemed to explode upon our heads. The lightning was almost blinding. With my one oar I propelled the launch into the basin. The elder man with a single stroke of his oars shot the little boat forward. They were off.

"You are staying awhile longer then?" he said, swiftly increasing the distance between us. The wind blew now in fitful gusts, the waves were rising. Ought I to invite them to remain with me until the storm passed? I could not entertain the thought. The launch was in a safe place again. I scrambled up the steep grey wall more quickly than at the first time. Though the little tree was gone I found a loose boulder, which I laid on the rope end. Then I carried other large stones, as big as I could lift, and placed them on it. They made a better mooring than the cedar.

Looking after the boat I thought she would have been further away. They evidently found wind and water against them. Would they come back? On thought of the bare possibility I hurried to the ruin, rolled the stones into the hole, frantically raked the soil and ashes into place. The rain poured down like a flood. The storm was getting worse and worse. In ten minutes I had half filled in the excavation, and I ran out to look at the men in the boat. Through the mist of rain I could not see the mainland. I could hardly tell which was the direction they had taken. Then I saw them faintly appearing, like a smudge, but I could not tell in which direction they were heading. I was conscience-stricken not to have urged them to

stay. Katherine Dunbar—what would she say or think of this lack of hospitality, this ingratitude, this unsoldierly behaviour? I began to wave to them, though they could never have seen me. The storm became more furious, the water swelled into awful waves. They would be drowned! Then just as I thought things were desperately bad, a lull came in the storm. I saw the men plainly—more than that, I heard them. It was a remark made by the elder man, astonishingly irrevelent:

"One solid mass of igneous mineral. But not the slightest trace of being of volcanic origin. Plainly glacial."

I burst out laughing. On the unstable deep they talked of *terra firma*. Were they indifferent to the danger?

That cool remark, overheard in the momentary silence of the tempest, slaked my anxiety for their safety. I went once more to the old house and continued filling in. Ashes, stones, and soil I pitched into the hole—until it was filled in, and more than filled in. It became a low mound of grey ashes.

Passing out of the house by way of the arch formed under the chimney I made one more discovery of note. But a yard or two and I came upon stone steps running, in a winding flight up, up a steep bank, overgrown with trees and undergrowth. It may be incorrect to call loose stones—heaved and unearthed and tossed out of place by the frosts of a hundred and fifty winters—a staircase. That was what I supposed they had been, though now they could no longer serve such a pur-

pose. I climbed the bank, more hindered than helped by them, until I stood on the summit of a hill sixty or seventy feet high. A look-out? Yes, obviously. No trees were hardy enough to grow on that hill-top, it was barren as well as bleak. Yet the top of many a pine and fir were higher still, and partially obscured the view. But where was the view? I looked around me in surprise—I had lost my bearings. Where was the mainland? I could not tell. Only mist and rain like a curtain hung around me. Which was north or south, or east or west? I could hardly tell. What once might have been a seat invited me to rest, but before I accepted the invitation I went down to the boat to get my pipe and tobacco. When I got there I first peeled off my sodden clothes and wrung them out—streams testifying to the drenching I had received. My smoking materials were found safe and dry in the locker, and also my coat. Clad again in my damp garments I returned to the look-out on the hill, and there sat down to smoke and think and rest awhile.

A strong wind was blowing from the east, a warm but pleasant wind, bearing a fine wet spray. I hoped it would change the weather, and that by sunset the water would be sufficiently smooth to allow me to go home safely, which expectation of mine shows that I am no judge of weather. Later events showed me that I ought to have been alarmed by that humid wind and not encouraged. There is this satisfaction, however, about a fool's paradise, that the fool is happy in his dream until

the truth dispels it. Falsehood sometimes is most kind, and truth is cruel. If, without knowledge of the treasure beneath my feet, I had found myself alone on that island, on that hot and stormy day, I would have counted myself most miserable. I would have taken note of my wretchedness and would have sunk down in despair. For I was weary with my toil. I was wet, hungry, and unsheltered. My face and arms were scratched and sore with the lacerations of thorns and trees, my skin was tortured with mosquito stings, and my hands were blistered and cut. What a plight to be in, I would have thought—alone on an island—under such conditions. So much do our opinions depend upon our points of view that I have since thought of that afternoon as a proof of the power of moods to guide a man. Our moods are only opinions, then, and opinions are only moods. My mood, just then, was a happy one, and so my opinion of the world and all the people in it was a feeling of good-will. Fate has often shown her contempt for me—allowed me to be buried alive in a gun-pit on the Somme, for instance—and now I had only a high esteem for Fate. Fate was very kind to me, I thought. Thus I was honestly engaged in summing up the situation. So far all my hopes and ambitions regarding the treasure had been realized. The island had been reached—the treasure had been located, no one had forestalled me, it was covered up once more. Four o'clock in the afternoon, by summer time. Six hours more of daylight remained—ample time for the

wind to drop and the water to subside. Then I would be off. To-morrow I would return with a crowbar, and with block and tackle. If such things were not procurable at the Chateau Royal then I would go to a farm for them. Yes, and an axe to cut poles with, for a tripod. And spare cord too. I would do it all by myself. I would construct a crane over the cliff and lower the chest into the boat. Braving all curiosity and publicity, I would land it on the stone dock, under the gaze of all the guests at the Chateau if all the guests cared to look at me. I would acknowledge my ownership of Station Island, and blandly ignore impertinent questions about the box. Then, as soon as possible, away to Montreal with it! Doctor Bernard should assist me, or watch me, with chisel and hammer pounding it, battering it, forcing it, open. And then we would see the gold, we would gloat over the gold! It should be marketed and its value realized. I would get a big box in a bank vault and fill it with crisp paper! And then—westward ho!—and Katherine.

Yes, Katherine. I would ask Katherine to marry me. For our honeymoon we would come to Baubee Bay. Then we would visit this island and I would tell the whole story to her on the spot. She must marry me at once—in a few weeks—so that we could come here before the end of the summer. Mercy! What spectacle did I see before me on the lake? It was on the side of the island opposite to that of the ruin and the tiny harbour. A quarter of a mile out was a boat of some kind with several

people on her and one of them, a tall figure, was waving in distress. Then I heard their voices. They shouted in chorus an organized shout—a message. How could I tell what they were saying in such a noisy wind? I strained my ears, with my hands behind them. They could not see me, but it must be me they were trying to reach. Now again — what could it be? "Ding-dong-bell?" Nonsense! Surely I was mistaken. It came again. Now I had it.

"Bring—your—boat!"

I bounded down the slope, yelling unnecessarily a reply they could not hear. Never was I more quickly alarmed, and never more quickly did I respond to a call to duty.

CHAPTER IV

STORM, WRECK, AND RESCUE

THAT motor-launch served me well as long as I had her, but I did not have her very long. This trip out into stormy water was her last trip, and, as if she knew it, she did her best to the final revolution of her engine. So rough had the water become that at one moment the whirring propeller was throwing spray into the air, and at the next water was pouring over the stern. I first headed clear of all the foaming breakers, which warned me of the rocks that surrounded the island, and then made a sweep round the leeward side. It was most difficult to keep the right direction as I clung to the wheel, for the wind beat me round like a toy. Sometimes the shipwrecked party were quite out of my sight, and more than once I supposed they had suddenly sunk. They told me afterwards they had thought the same of me.

Luck was on our side, however, for the waves and the wind accomplished what an unskilled boatman like myself could never have done. We were brought close together, and that without ramming or overturning. I do not know at what moment I became aware of the occupants of the other

craft, or their number, sex and condition. Probably it gradually dawned on me as the adventure progressed. There were two vessels—one being the Campions' boat—with those worthy fishermen in it. They were holding on to the sides of the other, a sailing boat, with a bare mast rocking in the wind. In the latter were three persons—two young women and a little boy.

"Throw a tow-line!" I shouted, and it was done. Truly the promptness of those brave girls was splendid. I do love a brave woman. One of them stood up and threw a coil with cool precision, for it fell right over me. Of course I could not stop the engine, and leave the wheel, to tie it, so I just wound it round my waist—certainly, if it had parted, I would have known it. At that same moment it gave me a fearful jerk. I turned from the wind, and giving her gas, let her go. Then, for a few minutes, it was easy, and, looking back, I noted my tow—two boats—no small burden to have girdled about your middle.

Responsibility is a fine thing to nerve a man. Sometimes since then, as I have thought of that storm, wreck, and rescue, I have squirmed even more than at the remembrance of the Boche's high explosives. But, at the time, I seemed to be sure of safety. I was not sure of getting back to the island, but, as I struggled on, I felt that something could be done by struggling—my effort would be rewarded. I must do it, and I did it—but I willingly give the credit to the sturdy, faithful little engine.

I endeavoured to get under the island again, but was carried well past it. Therefore we turned right about, heading into the wind. The island was a blurr before me—we must have been a mile beyond it—and I was half blinded by the rain. After what seemed a very long time I began to wonder if we were getting any nearer, but it was soon proved that we were gaining a little. Gradually we approached that area under the lee shore which was comparatively shaded from the storm. As soon as we got into that sheltered space we seemed to shoot forward. But the nich in the rock was yet round a bend. Could we reach it? There was nothing to do but try.

The foam was telling me where to mind the teeth of sudden death, and I steered by, as I hoped, into the channel, and as we turned we felt the full force of the storm. But little by little we drew up to the cliff. A few fathoms—a few feet, and we would be there. Were we moving at all? The motor was still running but surely the explosions were weakening. Chug—chug—chug—chug—chug—chug—.

She could go no further. At the very door of safety she failed, but—thank Heaven—it was near enough. For just there we were sheltered. I leaped on to the deck bow, and again into the mouth of the basin, and a momentarily slack line enabled me to swim right in—till I touched bottom. Then of course I turned and hauled—if my whole strength was not in use just then it never has been.

The motor-boat was gone. The Campions, at that moment letting go their own half-filled tub, saw her roll over as she broke her back on the rocks. I was scrambling up the steep cliff with the haste of necessity and the skill of experience. At the top I fastened the rope, and took breath. The Campions had climbed into the yacht, and all members of the party were looking up to me, eighteen feet above them.

"Well, Mortimer, what next?" roared the stentorian voice of Mr. Campion.

"Help the girls!" I replied, feeling as I did so, that commands were not for me to give. But they obeyed me, Mr. Campion climbing up a little way with one at a time, and making each, in her turn, step upon his broad shoulders. Lying flat on the edge of the cliff, I held tightly to the rope with one hand, and with the other grasped each girl by the arm and lifted her up. As I drew up the first —her face was close to mine—she smiled sweetly, and her dark, deep eyes shone brightly. Her hair was blowing loosely, having broken from all former restraint, but the girl who came up second had her fairer tresses tucked neatly into her cap. Then came the boy, a lively little Nimrod, only eight years old. The Campions did not immediately ascend, but baled out water. The rain now came down in torrents, accompanied by thunder and lightning that was as awing and as continuous as in any storm I ever experienced. The men felt their baling to be useless, for the time, and began throwing up more rope and im-

provising a ladder. I turned from helping them to look at the others, who, a few yards back, crouched together on the ground. The two girls rose to meet me, rather solemnly I thought, and frankly holding up their faces. I do not know why I spoke as I did.

"Well, and who are you?" I asked, looking at one and then at the other.

"My name is Nora Daw," said the fair girl, "and this is my sister Nancy, and this is my brother Jim."

They looked at each other as though to agree on something.

"You—you saved our lives!" said Nora, her pretty lips quivering.

"Thank you for what you've done," said Nancy.

Then, as they sat down again—to cry and cling to each other—I felt quite a fool, and turned to help the men.

"Any sticks up there?" called Mr. Campion. "If there are, let us have them, and we will make rungs of them."

I found a pine, the lower branches of which I could break off, and I took them to him.

That being done the Campions also came up, the elder man's first remarks being surprising, and not very apropos.

"Arthur," said he, "we must have photographs of that," pointing down to the narrow harbour which nature had provided.

"Have you recognized what it is, Sir?" he said, turning to me, "but, ah, the poor young ladies!"

Their tears were dried, and those also of the boy Jim, who joined with them, but the rain was not abating.

"How fortunate we were not delayed any longer," said Arthur Campion with some sense, "It is getting dreadful now."

"If Mr. Mortimer had not come for us when he did we would never have got back. Now, can't we find a less exposed place than this?"

"We ought to get up the sail and put it over the ladies for protection," said Arthur.

"Yes, Arthur," said his father, "we'll do that."

Arthur went down into the boat with a huge hunter's knife of the elder man's and cut loose the canvas, and soon we put it over the Daw girls and boy. They made a kind of tent of it with a couple of branches.

"You must come inside too," said Miss Nora.

"Yes, all of you," added her sister.

So we all got under the sail and helped both to hold it up and to keep it from blowing away.

"This is all very well," said Mr. Campion, "but ought we not to be flying this sail as a flag on the trees? We are all as wet as it is possible to be—we look as if we were dressed in silk—and the sooner we show a signal of distress the better. If we stay under this thing all night we shall be no nearer home."

"Do you think they would see it from the Chateau?" I asked him.

"No. They cannot see this island from the Chateau. But surely they are on the look-out for us, and somebody would see it from somewhere. I wish that all the people in Baubee Bay could have seen your exploit, anyhow, Mr. Mortimer."

"Oh, wasn't it splendid?" said Nancy.

Very little more was said, except monosyllabic exchanges, for some time, on account of the noise of the storm. Conversation soon flags if it has to be carried on at the top of your voice. So we sat and waited for an hour or more. Then judging that the worst was over we emerged, Mr. Campion going out first, and on finding the rain less violent, inviting us to follow him.

"There's Baubee Bay," said Arthur, sadly.

"Yes, and here's Station Island," said I, bitterly.

"And the wild waves roll between," said Mr. Campion.

"But there's no rescue boat coming," said Arthur.

"Well they don't know where we are," said his father. "A boat may be out looking for us for all that. Had we not better go round the island and look in all directions?"

"Yes, that is the right thing to do. The ladies had better get under the sail again until we come back," I said.

"Oh, can't we come?" Nancy cried.

"Would you care to do so? Certainly," I said. So we all set off, Mr. Campion quite naturally leading the way.

We walked all round the island on the edge of the cliffs, getting many an extra drenching from the big waves that smacked against them and rolled over them. The surface of the lake was so turbulent that the wide chain of rocks that encircled the island was completely enveloped in surf, and beyond that white foam, the green water heaved and sank, alternately, into dreadful hillocks and gullies.

Mr. Campion did not seem to remember that I had been on the island all day and so must know more about it than anyone else. He went ahead as though in charge of us, taking big, deliberate strides, and planting down his feet unerringly. Arthur, and Nora Daw, the betwitching, fair girl, scrambled after him, and Nancy Daw came next with myself. I hung back a little, partly from weariness, and partly to assist little Jim over the rough places. And so I was last in the procession.

The details of my story must be written in order that my honour may be vindicated, and suspicions of some kind that might attach to me if I left any notable gaps. The circumstances of the day, which began so peacefully, had culminated in the strange plight of being storm-bound on a lonely island, in company of several strangers—two being prepossessing young ladies—but those circumstances were none of my seeking. I was the victim of the caprice of fortune, albeit a willing victim. For to tell the truth, I was beginning to enjoy the situation.

Nancy slipped down on the wet slab at one difficult place and I jumped forward to help her up. She looked up with a smile and a light in her frank, bright eyes that were characteristic of her, as I soon learned. I gave her my hand.

"Oh, wasn't I careless?" she said.

"Are you hurt?" I asked, and perhaps I looked too closely into her eyes as I did so, for she blushed deeply, in a flash, and dropped her eyes.

Was that coyness? Was it art? Or was it natural? Whatever it was it made me start, and the effect did not die away. I followed on after that incident with more sprightliness, and I fancied that Nancy was less careful how she stepped. But she did not fall again.

Mr. Campion out-distanced us all, and when we got back to the point from which we started, had begun to work upon another matter. As we came up he greeted us thus:

"Now come along and help to save the boat!"

At that I ran forward in alarm, having already had the chagrin of seeing my boat broken loose and drifting on the lake. I dashed past the others.

"What is the matter? Has she got away from us?" I shouted.

"No, but she is banging on the rock enough to smash in her sides. We must make some fenders to protect her. Have you got an axe?" he said.

"All I had is at the bottom of the lake," I replied, "but I never had an axe"—which was not strictly true, as I suddenly remembered. There was the trowel! That small and useful gardener's

tool was somewhere in the old wild garden near the ruin, where I had dropped it. But the rosary and the Crucifix—alas! They, poor links with the dim past, went down with the motor launch.

"Then I suppose we have nothing better than this to cut down trees with," said this resourceful man, cutting into a young spruce with his big knife. It was a hunter's sheath knife, with nine inches of good steel. And Mr. Campion knew how to use it. Half a dozen dexterous cuts took enough out of a tree trunk, of four inches diameter, to make it break off, under a little pressure. A few more vigorous slashes and the trunk was stripped of branches. The operation was several times repeated on small trees growing ready to hand, until we had enough short poles with which to protect the frail shell of a boat, which, at present, was our only means of escape from the island. Descending to the boat by means of the excellent ladder the Campions had made, we tied them in pairs by short ropes which we passed under the keel—no easy task—and fastened the upper ends of the fenders to rings purposely bolted in the gunwale. This work, taken part in by all three of us men, was interrupted by many spasms of baling out water. Arthur Campion suggested that we might save the yacht many bumps, on returning to the level above, by another mooring line. So, having finished the fenders, we attended to that suggestion and finally, after a great deal of hard work, were satisfied that we had achieved the desired result. The boat

was safe, baled out, and would not batter to pieces.

The thunder-storm was now practically over, as far as we were concerned. It still rained hard, and the wind, as Arthur said, with a touch of humour, was "most abusive." But the rumbling and flashing to the south-west seemed to be a churlish farewell. Nancy and Nora Daw took that view of it, at least, for they cheered the heart of their little brother, Jim, by expressing their hopes unmistakeably.

"It's all over now, Jimmy," said Nora, "The storm has nearly gone, and the rain will stop in a minute."

"Good-bye, old storm!" cried Nora, in a playful posture, waving with her hands—dainty little hands—towards the leaden clouds. And then she broke into a song, in which her sister and brother joined her—a glorious song, "Good-bye." Arthur Campion also joined in, with a ringing tenor voice, and I could not be silent myself. The boisterous noise of wind and water seemed to be in harmony with that spontaneous burst. Mr. Campion was most appreciative, and if he did not sing he laughed, and that most heartily.

"Splendid! Splendid!" he cried, "such harmony proves we are affinities. But, now, come! Do you know what time it is? It's nearly seven o'clock! I believe we'll be here all night. Ha! ha! Don't let that prospect alarm you, ladies. We can be fairly comfortable here for once."

"But, do you really mean it? Do you think we shall not get away to-night?" asked Nancy, her

beautiful eyes wide open with what I thought, for the moment, to be anxiety.

"I do mean it," replied Mr. Campion, yet not brutally.

To my astonishment she burst into a merry peal of laughter, singing with wild abandon.

"Hurrah, hurrah, we've beaten them again!"

Whereupon Arthur Campion threw back his head and roared.

"Nancy! Nancy!" remonstrated her sister. "It is perfectly dreadful if we have to stay here all night. Whatever are you thinking?"

But a mild rebuke would not quieten Nancy. It only fed her mirth, and she seemed inclined to add dancing to her singing.

The elder Campion and myself, I think, were more surprised at the girl than anything else. I saw him pull his moustache in a perplexed way. As for myself I just stared at her.

"Could we not make a start in a little while?" Nora almost pleaded, "Or don't you think somebody will be coming past here?"

In the kind tone he had used before, Mr. Campion answered her.

"Well, now you have seen for yourself that no vessel or boat of any kind is in sight. You see for yourself what the water is like. I am used to rough weather on the water, but I tell you frankly, while it blows like this I dare not put out that dinghy of yours. If we did start in her we could not sail, and we could not row. I know they have not got a boat at Baubee Bay that could face

this kind of thing. So I do not think there is much chance of a rescue being attempted to-night. The evening is drawing on."

"The wind is dropping a little, father," said Arthur, by way of modifying his parent's matter-of-fact summary of the severity of the storm.

"Yes," I agreed, "and the rain will soon be over. But if we are going to be here for the night we ought to begin to prepare for it," and turning to the two men, I added, "I only fear that we shall suffer with cold. What about a fire to dry our clothes? Can we get one started?"

Nora was now the enthusiastic girl and she suddenly cried:

"Then, if we are to stay here, get up our things!"

"What things?" one of us asked.

"Why, all the things in our boat. The lunch basket, and spirit lamp, and fish, and everything."

"In your boat?" I almost shouted, and may I be forgiven, for to tell the truth I was half famished. "Have you got things to eat in your boat? Where are they?"

"In the locker."

"Won't they be spoiled now?" was Arthur's question.

"Spoiled? Oh, no! They're all tight and dry in the forward locker."

Arthur and I would have gone down immediately, but Mr. Campion would not let us do so.

"Let us look for a place where we can make a

camp, first," he said. "I'll go this way, and you, Mr. Mortimer and Arthur, take another direction —and if you find a suitable open space or clearing, especially under pine trees, yell for me. You shall hear from me if I find one first. Ladies, you and the little boy stay here till we come back."

So we began the quest for a camping ground, and while Arthur Campion and I were struggling among boulders and tangled underbrush, Mr. Campion, in three minutes, found the old garden and the ruin.

"Come and look at this!" he shouted.

We all ran in his direction, into the clearing.

I feigned surprise or ignorance, which was easy, for while the others said so much my silence was not noticeable.

They advanced through briars and weeds to the house, gazing at the white stone walls in astonishment. They speculated, as I had speculated, as to the origin of such a place. In their first surprise they seemed to think someone lived there, not regarding the fact that it was roofless. Anyhow they hallooed vigorously, even until they thrust aside the creepers at the doorway, and saw inside. I was the last to enter. Mr. Campion was tapping the walls, stamping on the floor, and saying:

"Made for us! Made on purpose!"

His son suggested that it was the very place in which to make a fire. So it was. There was protection from the wind between the high walls—a protection both for ourselves and for the fire itself.

The rain was still falling, but getting thinner. The question next to be settled was that of fuel.

"Are you an experienced camper, Mr. Mortimer?" asked Mr. Campion.

"An experienced camper, Sir? Well, I have been on hunting trips a few times."

"I wondered if you were practised in the art of making a fire after rain?"

"Oh, I'm no Indian," I protested.

"Well, my own method is to make one of some dry shavings first, and to feed it with dead sticks, which I scrape with my knife to take off the damp outside. Then as the fire gets bigger it will dry enough wood to keep it going if you make piles of it close to the fire."

"There are lots of resinous trees here," said Arthur. "We'll get a fire going, somehow."

"Well, scout, everybody, and gather dead wood! Hello, where are those children?"

For the Daws, all three of them had gone. We found them at the boat. Nora was on the top of the cliff, and Nancy and Jim were in the yacht.

"The boat is taking water!" Nora informed us in alarm.

"Oh, why did you go down, Miss Daw?" I cried to Nancy in the half swamped boat.

"Will you come down and help me?" was her reply.

So I went down, and helped to get out of the locker everything it contained. Not the least important was a can of methylated spirit. There was a picnic basket in which, as Nancy told me,

was enough for one meal for all of us. The fish she had spoken of, however, were not good, and we threw them into the water.

Realizing that it would be useless to bale water out of a boat that had a hole in her bottom, until she was repaired, we did not resume that arduous task, although we were standing knee deep in it.

"We have enough food here to keep us for days," said Nancy, head and arms deep in the locker.

"Have you really? Why, what are you doing with all these things?" I asked, thrusting my own head in beside hers.

"Well, you see we went on a shopping expedition to-day," and she tugged at a parcel of groceries. "Can you lift this?"

Having obeyed her, and having attached a line to it for someone to pull up from above, I said:

"But there are no stores at Baubee Bay are there?"—quite puzzled as to her meaning.

"At Baubee Bay? I don't know—I've never been there. We were on our way there this afternoon, but stopped to do some fishing, and so got caught in the storm."

"You've never been to Baubee Bay?" I exclaimed. "Oh, I thought you were from there, like the rest of us."

"No. We are from Port Dalzell. Can you pull out that case of bottles? It's ginger beer. If we drink it all here father will get none of it, after all."

I pulled out the case of Ginger Beer, and it in

turn was hoisted to the top. There was nothing else worth taking, so we prepared to ascend.

Coming up after Nancy I found that the Campions were discussing with Nora plans for a meal. The Campions were declining to partake of the provisions of the Daws, and I joined with them. But, being persuaded that there was enough and to spare for the next twenty-four hours, we at length gave in to such an overwhelming argument.

"At least, let us get our camp ready first," said Arthur Campion.

"That we must do and without delay," said his father, "for it may be dark before we finish, and we can eat a mouthful in the dark, but we need daylight to put a roof on that house by."

All laughed at that, and set off to convey picnic-basket, parcels, sail, and all that we possessed, to the spacious ruin.

"Do you know," I said to the Campions, in the presence of the Daws, "that these ladies do not come from Baubee Bay?"

"Yes. Port Dalzell is painted plainly on their boat," said Mr. Campion.

"I am not observant, then," I said.

"Will your friends be very anxious for you?" he asked them, and Nora replied :

"We think they may not be because they expected us to go to Baubee Bay this morning, and they would count on us being there before the storm."

"I see. And so they may think you are there now, unable to get away?"

"Yes. That is what we think."

"I am sure you think very sensibly."

Nancy laughed again her merry laugh.

"Nora," she said, "remember to tell father that."

"Now," said Mr. Campion, "now, fellow-sufferers, let us collect the dryest kindling-wood we can find."

We did as required. Stooping to pass under a low branch a moment afterwards, I found Nancy Daw seated on the ground, nursing a sprained ankle.

"Oh, what have you done?" I exclaimed.

She looked at me through a curtain of dark brown hair, and laughed, but none too heartily this time.

"I caught my foot in a root or something, and gave it a wrench. That is what it is to be a tomboy. I don't mind a bit, though."

She wanted to stay there for a little while, and, none of the others, her sister especially, being at hand, I sat down beside her and waited. The alternative I might have taken was to carry her, and I dismissed that idea for the time. Ten minutes later we were found by Jim. He, dutiful boy, having taken several armfuls of sticks to the house, was feeling virtuous, and contemptuously charged us with laziness. Then he ran off, evidently intending to give information concerning us.

"Mr. Mortimer, you go now. I'll come in a few minutes."

"I can't go and leave you," I said. "Shall I call for your sister?" and I rose to leave her for that purpose.

"Oh, no! Don't go after her. Don't stop her working. Just stay here."

"What?" I exclaimed, "I am not to stop your sister gathering wood, but I can stop doing so myself?"

It was thoughtless of me to say that. She blushed and looked down, and I turned away. To cover her confusion she rose, and we began to make slow progress towards the house. On the way of course we fell in with each of the others in turn, and an explanation had to be given.

The fire had been started when we got into the house, the weeds were being torn up, and a wide, clean space made. A seat was prepared for Nancy Daw of sweet smelling balsam branches. Her sister, Nora, was detailed to stay by the fire and pile on sticks gradually. When a plentiful supply had been collected, we left the girls alone for a couple of hours, with orders from Mr. Campion to dry their clothes. The rain being finally over, we started another fire outside, a suitable place being found in the garden, and there we subjected our own sodden garments to a scorching heat.

The day was over, when, with a last burden of wood, we joined the Daws, and sat round the fire, a circle of bronzed and yellow faces. After the

pangs of hunger I had regained control of my appetite, and now I was prepared, if necessary, to go without food indefinitely. But such a liberal supply of delicious sandwiches and cakes did the young ladies produce that I was soon munching greedily all that was passed to me. We had a small pail of water, and with two aluminum cups we quaffed the harmless beverage, for it was agreed that the ginger beer should be kept for the next morning's breakfast.

A little fire outside a man, and a little fuel inside, combats much exhaustion. I shall never forget—surely none of us there will ever forget—that supper and fire-side. In the midst of us blazed the fire, around us were the grim stone walls, above us was the clear blue sky of evening, fast assuming the deeper hue of night. It was nearly ten o'clock, summer time.

"It is likely to be chilly to-night," said the observant and practical Campion, "and we ought to try to keep the fire going."

"Yes, sir," said I, "could you and I take turns at it?"

"Of course I'll do my share," said the son. "Let us divide the night into three watches and draw lots to settle our turns."

So we acted upon that suggestion. It fell to Campion to take first duty, from ten to one. Arthur was to take from one to four. I was alloted from four to seven.

Then, tired out as we were, we all began to seek a comfortable posture for sleeping. The Daws

were covered, on their side of the fire, by folds of sail cloth, a covering not to be despised.

"May I ask you a personal question, Mr. Mortimer?" said Mr. Campion, cramming tobacco into his pipe, ready for his vigil, "Are you not a soldier? It keeps coming into my head that I know you."

"Yes, I am a soldier," I assented, "or I was, till lately."

"I know! I know!" he cried, "You—I have heard of you somewhere. Are you—are you Captain Mortimer?"

"Yes."

"Why, you are Captain Mortimer, D.S.O.!"

I saw Nancy Daw raise her head and look in my direction.

"Are you a soldier?" I asked, for you never know, now-a-days, who is a major or a colonel.

"No—oh, no," he said, "I am employed by the Manitoba Geological Survey."

"A geologist," I muttered to myself, and went to sleep.

CHAPTER V

MAROONED BY FOUL WEATHER

ARTHUR CAMPION, with what I soon learned was characteristic kindness, allowed me to sleep more than my allotted time. When he roused me, so soundly had I been sleeping, that I asked him who he was. He answered in a whisper, saying, that if I did not mind looking after the fire, he would lie down, as he was not feeling well. The fact of it was that the whole adventure was hard on one who had been sick, as he had. His father, so he told me, had not called him until two o'clock, but it had been a pity to waken him at all. With a weary sigh he sank into his place.

Crawling off my own bed of pine needles I sat down nearer the fire, embracing my knees with my arms, and stared into the glowing embers. The pleasant warmth awakened me more perfectly, and then I looked around on my sleeping companions. Mr. Campion, great of limb and body, lay like a Templar's effigy on a tomb, only he was plainly too full of life to quite fill the part. His son, of smaller build, was a contrast in his weariness and pain. Already he was asleep. I softly drew across him the sail cloth that had covered

me. I stared across at the girls, wondering if it was very bold to look on beauty asleep. A misty light only awoke the temptation to look again. And as I glanced again and then again, each time I took more time about it. A wood fire, as an illuminant, does not give a very clear view of surrounding objects, especially when it has ceased to blaze, and has become a smouldering heap of coals. I thought perhaps it was my duty to look at those over whom I was on guard to see if they were all right, and rising, I stepped quietly towards the Daws' side of the fire.

Little Jim Daw was embracing his sister Nora, burying his face in her shoulder, his hair mingling with hers. I bent over them one moment—yes, both breathed comfortably. Now I would look at Nancy. She was not so easily seen, her face was in shadow, and a branch of pine from her evergreen couch thrust its protecting arms and hands above and about her. Throwing on some fresh fire-wood I made flames mount up in a moment, and then, trembling with my own daring, looked again at Nancy. Her face, in repose, was surpassingly beautiful, yet, even so, there was a trace of the spirit she had shown awake. Something in the pout of her lips, showing warm and red, betokened sprightliness—or was it coquetry? I was not an expert, so how could I tell? I only knew that I felt a warning, however slight.

Then I made other observations. The pile of fire-wood, I was sure, had been replenished during

the night. That had been dark, difficult work for somebody. Had it been Mr. Campion or the exhausted Arthur who had scrambled and clawed in the woods for sticks that would burn? It would seem to be my duty to go out and do likewise, only that I would soon have the assistance of early dawn. With this in view I made for the doorway and passed out into the dewy garden, and thence to the rocky edge of the cliff. The wind was blowing from the west, a complete change during the night. The sky was clear, as a few bright stars told me, and the eastern horizon was already golden. I could dimly make out the coast of the mainland, though I could do no more than that. Baubee Bay, the Chateau Royal, the hundreds of guests in that comfortable hostelry were over there. But between ourselves, here on Station Island, and them there, with food and shelter, rolled miles of water. I looked anxiously at the water. It was not now as tempestuous as the night before, but it was still too rough for our one leaky little craft. But surely a few hours would bring a quieter state of things. I wanted to go back to the Chateau and obtain necessary equipment for proceeding with my treasure-finding. That might now be delayed a day or two, for I was determined to go about it by myself. For the present I might as well be on any other island as on this one.

Finding some big pieces of dead wood, I took them back with me to the house, and made up the fire again. The sleepers were still resting quietly

and I took a seat among them, filling my pipe for a smoke. All things considered we were wonderfully fortunate. We had tobacco, for instance, and matches. We had food and drink—yes, ginger beer. In an hour or two we would be drinking it at breakfast instead of coffee.

Morning came. It was to be a glorious day except for the wind. At half past seven Mr. Campion awoke and with him I had a whispered colloquy, chiefly about his son. When I said he should never have done his turn on watch his father pointed out that his pride could not have permitted exemption from his share of duty. Taking Mr. Campion out to the chimney end of the house, but being careful to avoid that sacred spot itself, I showed him the hill and the look-out, telling him how from its summit I had seen and heard them all in the yacht. At that moment a voice called to us and Arthur joined us, pale and looking tired still, but declaring he had had a lovely night.

"Let's go up there and have a smoke before breakfast. Hello! Where's my pipe, Go on, I'll be back in a minute," said Mr. Campion. With these words, he went to get his pipe, while Arthur and I climbed to the top and sat down on the stone bench. Hardly had we done so when the geologist returned, bounding up to us.

"The ladies are up," he said, "and have gone down to the boat with the pail to perform their ablutions. We'll go down in a minute and get breakfast ready. Captain Mortimer, how do you manage to look so spruce and clean?"

"If I look clean," I replied, "it must be because of the many washings I had yesterday."

We soon went down to the house and to breakfast. Nora was cutting slices of bread and tongue for sandwiches, with a small penknife, but Mr. Campion gave her his big knife. Nancy, her dark brown hair in two massive plaits, was on her knees, making dishes of birch bark. There was nothing for us men to do but to look on and admire such resourcefulness. There was no need now to keep the fire going, indeed we were tired of its revolving column of smoke which sought us all in turn. I stepped over to Nancy and stood before her.

"Can I do something?" I asked.

"Oh, good morning, Captain Mortimer," was her reply, with one swift and timid glance from her eyes.

"Ha! Good morning. Can I do anything?" I repeated.

"Can you do something? Can you do anything? Why, Mr. Mortimer, you know best. I saw you do a great deal yesterday. Just try again to-day," she said banteringly, "and I'm sure you'll succeed in accomplishing something."

"Apparently," I replied, with feeling, "you are setting me an example, at least."

She hung her head for a moment. What an amazing woman!

"As a matter of fact I wasn't thinking about you," she said.

"Oh, there would be no occasion," I rejoined.

"Captain Mortimer," called Nora, "will you open some ginger beer bottles, please? They are not very easy to manage."

Obediently I drew six corks, taking care not to spill any of that lively beverage, for which I was duly rewarded with praise from all except Nancy.

"Surely," I thought, "she is a different girl this morning."

"I have not yet fathomed the mystery," began Mr. Campion, devouring sandwiches with great relish, "of the victualling of this lone island for the sustenance of a number of marooned castaways."

"Yes, how does it happen?" asked Arthur of the Daws.

"Oh, it is easily explained," said Nora, "You know where we come from—Port Dalzell? We have been camping there at the mouth of the river —father and the three of us. Father got to know about that place through lake trade—you see, he's a marine lawyer in Detroit, where our home is. Well, we don't think much of the musty old stores in Port Dalzell, and we planned to sail over to Playter, which is a better village, only five miles. Then we so much wanted to see the Chateau Royal, and father had often promised that we should, so he said we might come on to Baubee Bay as well."

"Yes, and we started at nine o'clock and got there at one o'clock," piped in Jimmy.

"Why did your father not come with you?" enquired Arthur Campion.

"'Cause he went fishing with another man," said Jimmy.

"Yes. Father went up the river trolling for pike," said Nora.

Nancy, I noticed, was not eating, but pretending to do so.

"And you also went fishing, did you not?" asked Mr. Campion.

"Yes," continued Nora, "we landed on one of the islands outside the bay and had our lunch. Then the storm began to come and we thought we'd better get into the bay and go to the Chateau. So we started. Well, you know, we rowed and rowed, never trying the sail, of course, and just as we would get near the entrance we would be driven away, every time. Oh dear, oh dear! What a terrible time it was! We were half blinded by the rain and we could not tell which was the right direction at all. Then we kept trying to get back to the island we had left, and we couldn't do that. And then the worst of it came when we lost an oar. And then—oh, well, we just said our prayers."

"And we never got scared at all," chimed in the little brother.

"Oh, yes, Jim, we did," said Nora.

"At least you never got into a panic," said Mr. Campion in his rich, impressive tones, "No women in danger were ever more sane than you were."

"When we saw you in your boat struggling to get to us of course we took heart again."

"Oh, we were of little service to you," said Mr. Campion, "we merely helped you a little till Captain Mortimer came. He is our hero."

"Oh, no," said I, much embarrassed, "I would like to say something, Mr. Campion. I would like to confess something. When you left the island to go home I let you go. I know I was wrong, and I have felt awfully guilty about it ever since. I knew from that very moment I ought to have invited you to stay and be safe. I'm very sorry about it."

Then I stood up, having finished my breakfast.

"You should have invited us? What nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Campion, "Why, we chose to go home. Then it was providential that we went because we fell in with the Daws, you see," said he genially, blowing clouds of smoke, for he too had finished.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," said he, continuing, "Resolved:—That we all owe our very lives to Captain Mortimer, D.S.O.!"

"Carried! Hurrah!" they shrieked after me, for by this time I had escaped and was trampling a path through the garden. His voice, however, still reached me, in a stentorian roar:—

"And if ever we're in a tight corner again we want Captain Mortimer to come and help us out!"

Neither he nor I supposed that his conditional wish would soon be fulfilled.

I went to the little cove and looked down at the dinghy, bobbing and rocking no longer, because full of water and nearly submerged. How would

we escape if they did not come for us? I had no idea—walking around the cliffs, ever wetted by the spray of sea-like billows—gazing anxiously across the white breakers towards Baubee Bay. Had those stupid people over there forgotten about us? Were they not as much as going to look for us? Impatient reflections!

At a bend, where a large boulder made the pedestrian turn a sharp corner, I came suddenly upon a girl in tears. She sprang up from a sitting posture and quickly recovered herself.

"Miss Daw, I beg your pardon!" I exclaimed, turning and looking out at the water. Was it Nancy or Nora?

"I know it's awfully hard on you being here," I went on, to give her time, "but we'll be getting away soon, I expect."

"Oh thank you very much," said a calm voice. It was Nancy.

"It is a beautiful day," said I, not looking at her.

"I just had to have a cry over Daddy," said she, getting a very brave tone this time.

"Have you seen the look-out hill on this island? Come along and I'll show you where it is."

We set off for the steep little hill.

"You know, Daddy will be very anxious about us," she said, sticking to her theme.

"Mind this hole here," said I, sticking to mine.

"Captain Mortimer! Are you never going to look at me again?" This was very imperious.

I turned and looked her full in the face.

"You are very beautiful," said I, and bit my tongue for my madness.

"Mr. Mortimer, where is the hill?" she asked.

But when we arrived in the old garden and picked our steps through thorny, wild gooseberry bushes and raspberries, we did not immediately make that steep ascent. We met Jimmy and Nora throwing away the remains of breakfast, including the bottles.

"Where are the Campions?" I asked.

"They have gone to see if they can repair the boat," said Nora, looking hard at her sister, as though detecting traces of recent tears, though now her face was full of sunshine.

"Oh, Jim, give me those bottles. Give me just two of them. There's a darling boy! You can have the others," said Nancy, and having obtained what she asked for, turned to me, thrusting the two bottles into my hands.

"Come along!" she said, "If we want more of those bottles we can get them."

She entered the house, where all that we had rescued from the Daws' boat lay on the stone floor, and I followed her, wondering what was afoot.

"What are you going to do, Miss Daw?" I asked meekly.

"Let us write letters!" she replied, "Let us write letters!"

She dived into the collection of groceries and provisions and produced a packet of writing-paper and some pencils.

"Oh, I see!" I cried, "You are going to send your morning mail."

"Yes, won't it be fun? And see, here are stamps."

"But do we need stamps? This kind of mail matter goes free, you know. No charge for shipwrecked sailors—and no guarantee that the letters will be delivered."

"Oh, but if we put stamps on them whoever finds them will mail them. Can you find the corks belonging to the bottles?"

"Oh, I understand," said I, "You want to enjoy the novelty of writing letters to friends from the island where you are ship-wrecked? But you know it may be a long time before they are found by anyone, if ever. I threw those corks over this way, I think. Ah, here they are, all together."

"Where shall we go to write?" she asked.

"Shall we go up the hill? There is seat up there."

Behold me, therefore, in a few minutes, solemnly composing a letter to Dr. Bernard. It was the only one I wrote, but Miss Daw dashed off three, one, of course, being to her father. And she was very quick, finishing all three and cramming them into a bottle before I was half done. For what I wrote seemed to need care, lest it should be violated and read by someone for whom it was not intended. I headed it, "Station Island," and began.

My Dear Doctor Bernard:

I am writing to you by the Bottle Mail at the suggestion of a very charming sharer of this island resort. Lest this letter should prove puzzling, let me explain that having come here yesterday morning, on that errand with which you are familiar, I, with others, have been storm-stayed here ever since. The others to whom I refer are excellent companions, and in every way they are nice people to play Robinson Crusoe with. I was here when the storm began, but these others were ship-wrecked. We had a terrible time. I went out to them in my launch and helped them to safety, for which they are inclined to be too grateful. As I wanted to be alone here while I carried on my investigations I was not prepared to welcome any intruders. But Nora and Nancy have fed me with dainties under conditions that forbid the very thought of privations. Nancy is seated beside me now, on the highest point of the island, and is also writing to the land we seem to have left! Although my labours are suspended for the present, I must confess that I am enjoying this extraordinary situation immensely. All night we had a camp-fire burning, my own turn to keep watch being from 4 to 7 a.m. It is the first time I have had the glory of mounting guard over sleeping beauties. I can only tell you the whole story when I see you again. Let it now suffice to say that Nancy is a winsome creature, full of sparkle.

Now, Doctor, I confided to you my secret hopes, and you will not have forgotten my two-fold intention when I left you—first, to come here, for one purpose, and afterwards, to go further for a most important one. Baubee Bay I found occupied by one hotel company, and the Chateau Royal is a palatial place. I came here in a motor-boat alone, leaving the Chateau before any of the guests were about on Thursday (yesterday) morning. You will be most interested to learn of my progress. Well, I found

very conclusive evidence of that which my ancestor concealed. There is the ruin of a house here. Digging yesterday, before the interruption, I satisfied myself that I have a great legacy. It is my intention, when I have opportunity, to complete what I have begun.

This letter is now to be put into a bottle and thrown into the water. As it is quite likely that it will be some time before it reaches you I will give you more details in the next letter, which I hope soon to be able to send directly from Baubee Bay.

Hoping all is well with you and Mrs. Bernard,

Believe me, yours very sincerely,

RICHARD M. MORTIMER.

Perhaps what I wrote was not well-advised, but it had the merit of frankness and truth. As I wrote it I thought it would most likely never reach him, and yet that if it were read by any irresponsible person no real information was offered.

Nancy provided me with envelope and postage stamp. On the outside we wrote the words, "Finder, please mail." Then the greatest care was taken in corking the bottles, upon which, Nancy hurried me down to the cliff-head on the mainland side. Without any delay she kissed her bottle and flung it, as well as she could, clear of the surf-covered rocks. Before I threw mine I cut and sharpened a slender spruce twig which I thrust through the cork. I ripped a ribbon of linen out of my shirt sleeve and tied it like a little pennant to the projecting stick. It would show a foot above water. With this tiny signal attached I sent it up in the air to start it on its journey.

Having seen it splash into the water where I hoped it would miss a rock and be blown towards Baubee Bay, we watched it reappear after its plunge, and float away, the flag showing that it rode well.

"Oh, Captain Mortimer, why didn't you do that for my bottle?" said Nancy, complainingly.

"I would have done it with pleasure. Write some more letters, won't you? Then we'll put a pennant on the bottle."

"No, I will do nothing of the kind. I have done enough. Let us go in search of the others," said she.

So we went. They were all at the cove. As we appeared a shout of welcome went up.

"Come, Mr. Mortimer," said Nora, "and help these hard-working men."

I was astonished at what I saw. The boat was half out of the water, hanging by ropes to an improvised crane. The Campions had made excellent use of small trees which they had found lying in the bush. They had made a tripod, lashing it with ropes of the boat's tackle. They had attached the bow of the dinghy to a long slender pole, and using the tripod for a fulcrum had levered the boat from the cove till it hung with its stern submerged. When I arrived all were throwing their weight upon the end of the big lever.

"What are you going to do?" I asked as I ran towards them.

"Mend the hole," said Mr. Campion, "Can you

get something to hold down this end so that we can be relieved? We are only just balancing that boat."

"Don't let it throw you up in the air," I replied "What shall I get? Some more wood?"

"Bring the heaviest logs you can find," said Mr. Campion.

I entered the woods, looking for fallen trees, and I never lifted heavier weights in my life. I was simply turned into a beast of burden for an hour. No one could help me at first because everybody's weight was needed on the lever. Nancy would have helped but I forbade her attempting to do so. But when enough had been placed on the end of the long tree and the others were able to get off it I took a rest and the Campions completed the work.

"How are you going to do it?" I asked as I lay breathing heavily.

"We found some nails," said Arthur.

"You found some nails!" I replied in dismay. Had there been someone on the island recently then?

"Where did you find them?" I asked him.

"Miss Daw found them among her parcels."

"Oh, very good," said I, "and did she find a saw and a hammer too?"

"No. Not a hammer. But we have plenty of stones. We don't need a saw. Father can cut a piece of board with his knife. I believe he has his eye on the seat or something just now."

Mr. Campion and I descended into the cove,

and standing in water, began to patch the hole, an ugly fissure, close to the keel at the stern. Had I had to do it I would have given it up in despair, but this clever man worked at it patiently for over an hour. I was astonished at his resourcefulness and skill, using canvas shreds mixed with butter as calking.

"I want to tell you, Mr. Mortimer, my private opinion of our position here, without giving any unnecessary false alarm," said he, as we stood down there in four feet of water.

"I believe I know what you think," I replied, you think no rescue is likely to be attempted by the Chateau people to-day?"

"Worse than that," said he, solemnly, "I think they have given us up as lost."

"How can you think that?" I said, feeling rather uncomfortable at this view expressed by such a competent man.

"Because the day is half over, almost, and they have not come yet. That big motor-boat is quite capable of making this island. Her engine is very powerful and the boat is built for rough water. Timothy, the boat-house keeper, is fearless. The fact of it is they don't dream that we are on this island. They don't believe we could have landed here. They have put us down as lost.—Hand me my knife, please."

"But the water is not very inviting at present, even for a fearless man in a good boat," I argued.

"That is the other side of it," said he, "But we must not, if we can avoid it, be here another night.

The wind will drop to-night, and if this boat will float we shall be independent of rescue parties. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," I agreed, "and another thing we must remember is the friends of the Daws. According to what they tell us their father at Port Dalzell will suppose they are at the Chateau Royal, but he will expect to hear from them this morning."

"Yes," said Mr. Campion, "And not hearing from them will make enquiries, and suffer agonies of suspense, until he knows they are safe. That is the reason why we must not be here another night.—Have you some more nails?"

I produced some fine nails from my pocket.

"Then there is your son to consider," I continued, "He is not well. I fear he will suffer for this. He should be resting comfortably in a civilized place, sleeping in a proper bed and eating dainty meals."

"Oh, Arthur is well enough in most respects, and I am not so anxious about him. This life is likely to do him more good than harm. His exams were very hard on him this year and he had a touch of nerves, and I came east to fetch him home. We came here for a change first. In a week or so we'll go on to Winnipeg if he is feeling like it."

"The journey is liable to be tiresome to a student immediately after examinations," I remarked.

"Yes, I would never have dreamed of leaving my wife just now, had it not been for Arthur, for she is unwell and her daughter is not at home.—

Now, I think we have done all we can to that. If it will only keep out some of the water it will be good enough."

"Shall we go up now?" said I, for the water was not so warm that we could stay in it indefinitely. Indeed I was chilled to the marrow, as the saying is.

Up we came, and the ladies, seeing that we were cold as well as wet, suggested another fire for our special benefit. The fire was therefore started in the same place as the one we had going all night. And what a comfort it was to us! We dried our clothes by it and warmed ourselves thoroughly. After that we produced pipes and tobacco and set forth to seek Arthur Campion and the Daws.

"Let us go up to the observation-post," said I, and take another look from there."

"Ah, there speaks the artillery officer!" he replied, "Have you got your watch? What time is it now?"

I felt for my watch. It was gone—lost!

"I've lost it again!" I exclaimed in great annoyance, "Where can it be this time?"

"You lost it before did you? I saw you looking at it yesterday, I remember."

"Yes, I had it this morning, too. It seems doomed to be lost. It is just through not being used to that kind of a watch after using a wrist watch in the field for so long."

"Well, we will all look for it. Where have you been to-day? All round the island haven't you?"

"Yes," said I, "and all over it."

"Did you go up this hill?"

"Yes, I was up there, you know."

"Then we'll go up there and look for it."

Half way up a voice began calling my name. It was a girl's voice. I replied and turned back, while Mr. Campion went on. At the corner of the ruin I met Nancy Daw, radiant and genial.

"Captain Mortimer, is this yours?" said she, holding up my watch and the locket that had been my brother's attached to it, for I had fastened them together after the former accident.

"Yes, Miss Daw, it is, and I have just missed it. Mr. Campion has gone up the hill to look for it.—Mr. Campion! Found it!—Thanks so much. I am most grateful to you for it. I was prepared to search the island for it. I knew I had it a little while ago. Where was it? On the cliff?"

Mr. Campion joined us.

"Yes, it was on the cliff," said Nancy, "just where you laid your coat when you went down to mend the boat. But you must thank Jim. He was the finder."

Jimmy appeared.

"I thought it was Nancy's," said Jim, "Only I saw the watch was bigger than hers."

Nancy laughed.

"I have a gold watch with a locket attached," she said.

"Yes, but your's isn't the same. I opened this one," said the boy, pointing to the one I held in my hand, "and directly I saw it had a girl's face

in it I knew it was not Nancy's, because hers has a man's face in it."

I believe I stared at Nancy, and I am sure her eyes, large and bright, were a trifle widened with surprise if not with annoyance.

"Well, that was positive proof of ownership," was Mr. Campion's comment, as in a cloud of tobacco smoke he strode away.

I could not but feel that an explanation was demanded.

"The girl," said I, opening the locket and showing it to Nancy,, "was my brother's fiancée before he died."

CHAPTER VI

RISK OF LIFE TO SAVE LIFE

IN the ruin there were four small apertures in the walls, besides the doorway. So there had been four windows, two upstairs, and two on the ground floor. Only one of them, an upper one, was not filled with the foliage of trees, thrusting their branches through from the outside. One always gazes into fires or out of windows, and I stood and gazed out of that opening—into the sky. It was a blue sky, with never a wisp of cloud to be seen. Looking up there the grey stone opening became the frame of a portrait, and the portrait was one which held me rivetted. The blue sky was a neutral element, an intangible canvas, upon which memory and imagination painted a face—a face of great beauty. There were eyes deep and brilliant, lips of exquisite carving, a nose of delicate moulding, a brow of clear expanse—poised with majesty above the firm contour of a woman's neck. Hair, of unusual qualities—thick but lightsome, massive but free, brown but golden—was gathered over her shapely head. It was Katherine Dunbar. I saw her clearly, as a lover ought to see—for was I not her lover? True, I had been, for a few hours, in the company of a pretty girl, a

vivacious creature. True, I had been on terms of familiarity with a girl I never saw before yesterday, but were not the circumstances extraordinary? I had been on terms of familiarity but not on terms of cordiality. Cordiality with Nancy Daw—pert, coquettish, moody—oh, never!

After the strange incident of the locket I left Miss Nancy Daw, and turned, without a word, into the ruin. The thought that naturally flashed into my mind was that Nancy Daw was a double-dealing little flirt, and that she had been trying to make a fool of me with her flashing eyes and her dependent manner. Yesterday she fell and sprained her ankle—to-day there was no need to carry her about, but there was always the possibility of another fall when no one was near her but myself. She and I alone had sent off letters—I was glad they were not in the same bottle—and by her wish we had not invited the others to do the same. She had purposely misunderstood me and had shown all the caprice and shyness that is calculated to win the attention of an incautious young man. An incautious young man! That was not a description of Dick Mortimer—young, perhaps, if twenty-six is young—but no crafty maiden in distress should catch me off my guard. So I bethought me of Katherine — up there through the window in the sky—and gazed.

Voices in the distance roused me from my reverie. Everyone was speaking at once, excitedly, and coming nearer. I went to meet them as they hurried through the garden.

"Captain Mortimer!" cried Arthur, "There you are!—There is a boat in sight!"

"Do you know the Morse Code?" shouted Mr. Campion in his great voice.

"A boat coming?" was my eager reply, taking it for granted that it was a rescue party coming from Baubee Bay.

"How far off is it?" I asked.

"It's wrecked," said someone, as they reached me.

"Its a long way off," said someone else.

"Wrecked? What do you mean?" I began.

But Mr. Campion, striding on instead of stopping just there, seized me by the arm and dragged me with him.

"Come! Up to the look-out and signal to them. They seem to be in distress. We will make a flag and ask them how they are and if we can do anything—though I don't think we can—with that dinghy."

We mounted the steep hill, on the top of which our figures would easily be seen. Of course the others followed us, but Campion had no need for them. He only required me, an Artillery officer, to signal to the boat. He proceeded to cut a staff five or six feet long, to strip the bark roughly and to tie our handkerchiefs to it at one end.

When I got to the top and looked towards the mainland I saw the boat. It was a white boat, evidently, as we all agreed, the big forty-foot motor-launch from the Chateau. If she was in motion she was making little progress. As a

matter of fact she was making none, her engine had stalled, and as a rudder is useless to a motionless boat, she was turning round and round in the wind. The wind was against her, being a westerly gale of fifty miles an hour. As we looked steadily, shading our hands in the brilliant light, we could see water breaking over her. Two heads appeared and disappeared — they were baling water. A third figure stood upon the bows waving a flag. All this at a mile distant.

"Here!" said Mr. Campion, handing me the flag he had so quickly constructed, "Tell them we see, and ask what they suggest."

But first I swung my flag to and fro in a semicircle above my head till I saw the man do the same thing in response. He began at once to spell a word.

"He's beginning! I don't know if I can read it right," said I.

Dot — dash. Dot — dash — dot. Dot.

"A—R—E," said I.

Dash — dot — dot. Dot — dash. Dot — dash-— dash. Dot — dot — dot.

"D—A—W—S," said I.

Dash. Dot—dot—dot—dot. Dot. Dot—dash — dot. Dot.

"T—H—E—R—E," I read aloud.

The Daws could not restrain their excitement. They clung to each other.

"It's father! He's there!" declared Nora.

"Say 'yes'," said Arthur.

So I replied in the affirmative, and asked if they were coming for us. The reply was that the engine had stopped and that they would come later, but must now row back. This was very disappointing, and I asked "When?" and then as a result of a conference, I signalled:—

"Wait. We will come to you in our boat."

Until that message was sent our rescuers had supposed we were without a boat. On getting that message, however, they replied:—

"Coming nearer."

We all hurried down to where our dinghy lay and prepared to embark. A short time before we did not dream that we would be leaving the island for some hours. We were unexpectedly possessed with the idea that we could no longer remain there.

"Is it safe, Captain Mortimer?" asked Nora.

"If we get clear of the rocks we shall be all right, Miss Daw," I replied, though I had some misgivings.

The girls and the little boy went down.

"Oh, there is water in her," Jimmy announced.

"That little drop won't matter," said Nancy, and began to sing.

"There is no hurry to get out, remember," said Mr. Campion, "Wait till they come as close as they can."

"It will take them an awfully long time," said Arthur, "against this wind."

"How far off are they?" I asked, "Oh, I think they are making great headway."

"Do you think so, Sir?" said Mr. Campion.

"Yes, I suppose they have got under the lee of the island," I replied, watching the floundering launch.

"Why, there must be four men rowing," said Arthur in a few minutes.

"So there are," said Mr. Campion, "and a fifth is at the helm."

The girls called up to us to know if we were not going to start.

"Lots of time," I replied, "We will let them get a little nearer. When we get out we will not have to row at all. The wind will carry us in the right direction, and all we will have to do is steer alongside the big launch. Once we get into her it will be just a pleasant trip home."

But I was belieing my real feelings, for there was the channel through the rocks to be passed, and how to do that I could not think.

Pulling Mr. Campion to one side I said—

"What do you think? Is it too bad to attempt it?"

He shook his head gravely.

"I think its very, very risky," he replied, but if we all have poles in our hands we may be able to get out. Everyone must have a pole and push off the rocks. Those fenders had better be left on the boat—they may help to save us."

So we now set to work to find poles in lieu of oars of which we possessed not one.

The Daw girls were, for the whole of their detention on the island, exemplary in their courage,

patience and good sense—until the last. Then their fortitude was overwhelmed by a natural longing to escape. I try to excuse their madness because they had behaved so well before.

Through the opening of the cove Jim Daw spied the slowly approaching launch. He called the attention of his sisters to it, now so much nearer than when they last saw it. They seem to have ordered Jim up to look for us and bring us to the boat. At the same time they began to cast off the moorings in preparation for departure. But they had not counted on the result. Probably they supposed that the boat would lie in its sheltered harbour until thrust out. It was not so. The motion of water outside caused occasionally a violent suction, enough, in a few minutes to draw the boat out into the swirling water beyond. This is what was actually taking place when Jimmy Daw, not readily finding us, ran back and saw them, half out of the cove, reaching vainly for a hand-hold on the slippery sides. Child-like, he did not wish to be left behind, and clambering down the rope ladder, he entered the water and was just saved—only just saved—by his sisters, from drowning before their eyes. They might have been able to keep the yacht from drifting had it not been that they were called upon to rescue their little brother. Having had to do that, however, they had no more chance. With a great sucking noise they were drawn outside into the gulf of death.

Arthur Campion and I were at that moment approaching the spot on the cliff above, bearing

two cedar poles which were designed for oars. Loud screams made us hasten, and with dismay we saw in a flash what had happened. May I never again see terror so great on so beautiful a face as I then saw it on the face of Nancy Daw. It was more piteous than the expression of a soldier suddenly stricken with a mortal wound. And to pretend that because she was a brave girl she was not afraid would be unfair on my part.

Mr. Campion we had left behind, cutting more poles. The roar of the breakers effectively kept him in ignorance of the tragic thing that his son and I were facing. There was no time for anything but action. Some say it is instinct that prompts a man in the moment of sudden danger, but whatever rapid operation of mind it may be does not matter so long as it actuates the right action. Arthur and I without consultation or direction threw our cedar poles at the boat, at that moment ten or twelve feet from the base of the rock. We threw the poles, and dived after them. I could not have swam far in such a sea. It was by what some people call a superehuman effort that I got into the boat, for, unfortunately, I found myself, on rising, near to the bows—no place at which to climb in. Arthur Campion was in before me, having got in at the stern. He had also seized one of the poles—I ought to call it an oar—and was thrusting vigorously at a cruel rock. Without ceremony I took his place, for it was my duty to guide the boat in that channel. What I endeavoured to do, of course, was to get back

into the cove, but now I learned that a west wind did not permit it. It was impossible to propel a boat in the midst of those conflicting waves. Surely, I thought, this is the end of us! Spray blinded us. Masses of water lifted us and dropped us. At every white bulging mound of surf I thrust my pole, turning from side to side of the boat as well as I could. Once or twice as I did so I felt that the boat responded or the rock receded. And then—there were no more rocks, there was no more bottom, we were out of the channel! Glancing back I saw the figure of Mr. Campion on the island—a figure of horror, clutching his head with his hands.

By this time the men in the launch had seen us though they did not know what horrible danger we had just passed through. It seemed to me far worse than what we suffered the day before. A quarter of a mile away we saw them heading into the wind and almost directly for us. They waved to us but we had no time even to wave back. For the Daw girls were baling water with their hands, and Arthur Campion and I were busy with our one improvished oar, rowing at the stern, with the rudder top for a rowlock. We were all matching our strength against the strength of Lake Huron. If our strength lasted we could bring up with the launch and win the struggle—if not—

Time and tide and wind were all in our favour. We had time, the tide and wind hastened the progress of our swampy boat, and our strength was

sufficient to reach the side of the big careering launch. We bumped painfully against her side, helplessly, and three pairs of hands helped us aboard her. Mr. Daw, the father, was one of the five, a sharp-featured red-faced man. He moved like lightning, kissing each of his three rescued children and returning to his oar without loss of time. Our additional weight helped to steady the big boat, and when she turned to make for Baubee Bay the work of her crew was made much easier.

"May father is there still!" shouted Arthur Campion as soon as he found his voice.

"Is he safe?" asked the man who was steering. I saw it was my friend the keeper of the boat-house. He smiled to me. I recognized also the Indian chauffeur from the Chateau. He stolidly bent to his oar. The two other men were guests who had volunteered for the duty.

We landed at the pier under the eyes of all the guests and many of the employees of the Chateau Royal. Crossing the waters of the Bay was comparatively easy after battling the billows on the open lake. But the ordeal of landing was an unexpected addition. There were a score of friendly hands outstretched to help us ashore and as many more to shake congratulations. But everybody stared. I walked along with Nancy and Jimmy on either hand, ignoring the questions asked as well as I was able.

"Where is Mr. Campion?"

I answered the question twenty times if I an-

swered it once. Mr. Daw was following with Nora and on being asked the same quesetion by a lady replied:—

"Bless my soul, Ma'am, how should I know?"

I went to my room and changed my clothes. In a little while the manager of the Chateau came to see me. I was glad to see him. He asked me what I would like to eat. I replied that I would eat and drink anything he put before me. When I took my seat in the dining-room, alone, I lived up to my boast and consumed soup, fish, roast duck, strawberries and cream, and coffee with avidity. While I was still at it in came Mr. Daw with the manager. The man was in great haste and evidently greatly moved emotionally.

"Captain Mortimer! Ah, Captain Mortimer!" he cried, "I owe you everything! I owe everything to your courage, your skill, your promptness—to your prowess, to your sense of duty, to your gallantry—oh, what shall I say? My daughters have told me all about it. They have told me how you took your life in your hands yesterday, going out in that furious storm to get them. They have told me how you saved them again to-day from certain death, putting yourself in the most exposed position of the greatest jeopardy, the result of their own folly. They are all I have in the world, Sir,—Captain Mortimer,—those three children. And that I still have them is due to all that you have done."

"This is going a little bit strong, Sir," I replied, "Mr. Campion, senior, and his son"—

"I'll not forget them! I'll not forget them. They are splendid men. But they also attribute their own safety to you. I'll thank the Campions when I see them. I am sorry that the young man is unwell."—

"Is he unwell?" I asked.

"Yes," said the manager, "he is lying on his sofa exhausted. But he thinks he will be well enough in an hour to go with the launch to get his father."

This interruption to my meal was not ended, for as I renewed my attentions to my loaded dishes, Mr. Daw was seated before me to continue his speech-making, if he wished. I was glad that at that hour, four o'clock, the dining-room was empty. If he began his effusions before an audience I would succumb outright. He continued.

"I came here from Port Dalzell by car this morning, after telephoning."

"Oh, and that is how you knew your children were out there."

"Oh, I didn't know that they were out there on that island. I only hoped they were. When I learned over the telephone that they were not here at the Chateau I was frantic with anxiety."

"The young ladies," said I, "hoped that you would take for granted that they were here."

"Ah, but I wasn't going to take that for granted," said Mr. Daw, "But I was relieved a little when I heard that somebody had landed on Station Island."

"What!" I exclaimed in surprise, "How did they know that anybody was on that island?"

"They saw you last night—at least they saw a fire. I suppose you signalled by that means?"

"Never thought, Mr. Daw—but certainly we had a fire. And so they saw it? They must have been looking out for us?"

"Looking out for you? Of course they were—scores of them—and signalling—all night long."

"Indeed! Signalling?"

"Yes. That is," said Mr. Daw, "they lit fires on the outer island, which was as far as the rescuers got last night."

"Mr. Daw," said I, "this is all new to me. We never dreamed of signals. We saw no fires. Our fires on the island were for the purpose of drying our clothes—and were, like all our comforts, due to the ingenuity of Mr. Campion, who is a wonderful man. I hope we can soon go back and get him."

"We'll be able to go and get him by six or seven o'clock. Has he got anything to eat?"

"Yes," said I, "he's got a quantity of provisions and groceries which really belong to you."

"Ah, well, they are his now—and he's very welcome to them," said he.

When I had finished a most enjoyable repast I rose and together with Mr. Daw left the dining-room, crossed the hall, and stepped on to the porch, intending to enjoy a quiet cigar with which Mr. Daw furnished me. But as I emerged from the doorway I found myself the centre of scores

of people who embarrassed me by their congratulations and questions. I did not enjoy the attentions of so many, nor could I reply to their felicitations, but Mr. Daw enjoyed it all, and encouraged people to treat me as a hero. I would have withdrawn but Mr. Daw hung on to me.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Mr. Daw, raising his voice, and looking round on them, "many of you may have known Captain Mortimer—or you may have known of him—before yesterday. I, as an American and a new-comer, have only just made his acquaintance, but I shall cherish my knowledge of him till the day of my death. But for his heroism, which has greatly stirred you all, my little son and my two daughters would have been drowned. He risked his life to save their lives! I am publicly acknowledging what he has done, ladies and gentlemen,"— the people seemed inclined to cheer—"but, lest he rebuke me, I must couple his name with that of Mr. Campion, junior, who with Mr. Mortimer, delivered them from a perilous situation. Now, let me add one word more—as a suggestion. The launch is soon to go back to the island, I believe, if the water is calmer than it was. Mr. Mortimer will go with her to direct the rescue of Mr. Campion who is still on the island. When they come in, let us meet them on the pier and give him the ovation he deserves on the completion of his gallant task."

This speech was received with loud expressions of approval. But it saved me, by its very suggestion, from the crowning horror of further

public applause. No doubt my adverse feelings were shown in my face, as with trembling fingers I sought the handle of the door behind me and half turned to step inside. No sooner had I reached my room than a knock at my door proclaimed a caller. I opened to the friendly man whom I had met on the evening of my arrival.

"May I have a word with you?" said he.

"Come in," said I.

"All I have come for," he began, declining a seat with a wave of his hand, "is to ask you a question. I heard that enthusiastic American speaking to the guests a minute ago, and suggesting that they prepare to meet the launch, when it comes back, and greet you."

"Well?"

"Well. How would you like to have the orchestra playing down there in your honour, and later in the evening a big bonfire on the beach, and so on. What do you think?"

I stared at him, I fear, betraying the anger that I felt.

"What do I think? I think if there is any more of this damned nonsense"—

"Exactly, exactly," said he in a satisfied tone, "There shall be no more of it. The people would love to lionize you, but let them do it in their own way. We will not organize anything—unless you desire it."

"Desire it?" said I, "I only desire them to keep away from me and let me alone."

"I am a director of the Chateau Royal Com-

pany," he said, "and guessing the state of your feelings as a soldier and a gentleman I came to help you if you would let me. There shall be no demonstration,—I will see to it. No guests shall be allowed on the pier this time."

So he departed, promising to send for me when the launch was ready to start. He called again himself and escorted me from my room, through the hotel, down to the end of the dock. Mr. Daw was there, but few others, for most of them were preparing for dinner at that time, six o'clock. Mr. Daw was as lively as before, though I believe he had been toned down a bit. The engine of the boat had been put in order, and it was reported that the water was much smoother. Four men besides myself got in, one of them being the Indian who fetched me from the station. I sat beside him, and he seemed inclined to speak to me.

"I mailed the letter," he said, with a broad smile, as we glided away. I was greatly surprised.

"You mailed the letter? The letter in the bottle? Which one was it?"

"There was only one. It was to Montreal."

"It was mine then,—to Dr. Bernard. Where did you find it?"

"It was washed up on big island. That was some time after noon. We were watching there. Two of us came back to get the launch out. I gave it to another fellow. He was just going with the mail to catch the train."

"So the letter has gone! Splendid! I won't forget you for that."

At a good speed we shot out from the gap into the lake. The water was still very turbulent, but not half as bad as a few hours before. Our progress was good and uniform, until we slowed down to circle the island. The toot of the horn rang out and we shouted. In answer Mr. Campion appeared—not hastily however. He saluted with his hand and walked towards the cove. With a megaphone we spoke to him, telling him to swim out to the buoy which we would throw out. The reply he gave was to throw off his coat in readiness. Two life-buoys on long lines were thrown from the launch as she rolled in the middle of the channel. Mr. Campion was seen to enter the water and strike out. As a strong man I was sure he could do it, and he did. The instant we saw that he had hold of a buoy we set the engine going and backed slowly away, drawing him. In safe water we stopped and hauled him in. Hurrah! Now all were saved.

"Thank you, everybody," said he, "I suppose you got home safely with the first contingent?"

"Oh, Mr. Campion," I said with a laugh, "It was a shame to leave you behind."

"No, Captain," said he, "I did not mind it. As a matter of fact I did not think you others were choosing an opportune moment to embark."

"It was all an accident. The dinghy was set adrift by mistake, you know."

"So I supposed. I was left lamenting. But I have enjoyed my stay on the island immensely. And how are the others? How is Arthur?"

"I am sorry to report that he is feeling quite sick."

A shade of annoyance—not of pity—passed over his face. He brought down his hand upon the gunwale with an impatient smack. Was he angry because his son was sick? In a moment he was smiling again.

"Poor Arthur! These two days have been rather hard on him. He will have to stay here a little longer."

"Had you intended to leave?"

"To leave?—Yes," said Mr. Campion, "time is up."

"So you will be going west soon," said I, "to your home in Winnipeg, I suppose?"

"Oh, we have no settled home at present."

His speech sounded less courteous than usual; in fact, I thought conversation was distasteful to him. I made no further endeavour to keep it up.

When we arrived at the Chateau and came alongside the dock we found that there was no crowd to welcome us. But before we got to the hotel doors a number of people had gathered from somewhere, including the Daw girls, who, apparently, were about to start back for Port Dalzell. Their father was produced and introduced to Mr. Campion and then the Daws said good-bye. The delay gave the crowd an opportunity to increase, and Mr. Campion was thronged, being well known and much liked. It was plain, however, that he did not enjoy the popularity just then, perhaps on account of his wretched appearance in his wet

and dirty clothes, or because he, like me, did not wish to be made a hero. At any rate, with little ceremony he slipped into the house, and for an hour was not seen again.

When I saw him again it was at dinner, as we sat down with several new arrivals at the Chateau He was moody, I thought, not deigning to speak to anyone, so unlike the spirited man whom we had known on the island.

After dinner I stood and looked out of a window at the guests enjoying the charm of sunset across Lake Huron. I deemed it still unsafe to venture among them. Mr. Campion came up behind me.

"I am very tired and sleepy. Do you think it is too early to go to bed?"

"No, Mr. Campion," I said, turning round, "I am just thinking of doing that myself. We have earned a good sleep, haven't we?"

"Are you going over to call on the Daws, to-morrow?

I was surprised at the question.

"No.—At least I never thought of it. Ought I to go and call?"

"Well, if you do it would be as well to start early. Good-night."

I bade him good-night.

Daws indeed! Not if I knew it, and I felt that I did know. To-morrow Dick Mortimer was going back to his island. In the meantime some preparations might be made.

At the garage I found the Indian. I gave him a dollar—the correct procedure for my purpose.

"Get me a spade or a shovel, will you?"

"We have no shovel here. I would have to fetch one from the gardener."

Well, do that."

When he had gone on that errand, as no one was watching, I deliberately took a long bar out of a corner and carried it outside, putting it under some bushes. The Indian returned with a shovel.

"That will do," said I, taking it from him,

Outside the garage I threw it under the bushes, to keep company with the crow-bar till early morning. Then I called at the office and ordered breakfast for seven, and a boat with a mast, sail and tackle.

CHAPTER VII

A MOST ALARMING MORNING

A PERFECT summer's morning on the shores of Lake Huron! There is nothing like it—the sky above and the world below radiant with glory. I stood on the extreme end of the stone pier and enjoyed it and marvelled at it. The unequalled clearness of the atmosphere made it possible to see the details of the farthest distance as well as if close at hand. The massed trees, flourishing around the great bay, rising, tier on tier, as of a natural amphitheatre, were resplendent with a hundred hues of verdure. The surface of the water was a mirror of all these beauties of form and colour. And the depths of the water held values of another kind—sandy shallows, and pebble banks, and dark brown rocks, beneath whose shadows lurked many a perch and many a bass and countless other fry. I drank in the scene with my eyes as I drank in the sweet fresh air with my lungs. The water shimmered in the distance as a breath stirred it into ripples. Otherwise it was calm. And that was the only defect—there was no wind for sailing.

"Boat's ready, Sir," said the boy, who in obe-

dience to orders, had come on duty extra early to get it out for me.

"All right," said I, taking the rope from him, "Have you had your breakfast?"

"No, Sir, I'm just off to get it."

He seemed inclined to be communicative.

"Somebody's been round here in the night. But they didn't get nothing."

"What do you mean—in the boat house?"

"Yes, Sir. The lock on the door is smashed—" he showed me a broken padlock—"but I can't see what they did it for. The boss doesn't take the money here. They always have to pay at the Chateau for the boats. Seems queer, doesn't it?"

"Yes. But it must just have been a joke on you. You take my advice and bolt and get your breakfast," said I, tipping him in an endeavour to get him out of the way before I started.

As he turned and went I was busy with my pipe and tobacco, but as soon as he was well down the dock I quickly lifted a crowbar and a shovel into the dinghy—two pieces of freight the boat-boy had not seen me bring—sprang in myself, and was off.

I had to row all the way to the island this time, and it was seemingly a very long time before I picked my way into the channel and stood up to punt into the cove. I was tired with rowing and very glad to reach my destination. The ladder, of rough sticks and rope, still hung on the sloping side of the rock, and securing my dinghy to

it I mounted to the top. There I sat down a moment to plan.

"This is Saturday," I said to myself, "The week is nearly over. What a week of adventure it has been! What a story I shall have to tell somebody some day! If I can get the chest of gold out to-day I can get away with it to-morrow, I suppose. Or if there is no train on Sunday, I must wait until Monday. Sunday may delay progress a little more. But I need not let that worry me. There is plenty of time. Besides, I don't even know what I am going to find in that chest. But, here goes!"

I hauled up crowbar and shovel, shouldered them, and marched inland towards the ruin. I passed through the doorway and towards the fireplace, determined to begin work at once. Throwing down the heavy bar, I set to work digging out the bed of ashes which two days before I had so hurriedly thrown in with bare hands and a trowel. Ah! This was easier with a more suitable instrument. There were the big stones, and then there were the hewn square building stones of the foundation footing. Thud. There was the iron lid of the chest. A little more digging round it to make it more accessible. What a rotten condition old iron can reach! Ah, it was oak, then, as well as iron, and that tough substance was more enduring. Now for the crowbar.

I had made quite an extensive excavation, seven or eight feet wide and as many deep. I considered it as wise to open the chest there, where it lay

embedded, as to attempt to lift it out to the ground level. I banged it with the crowbar. Did it sound hollow? Impossible. It sounded full—so full it was ready to burst. So far as I could judge it was constructed of oak encased with iron, the plates of which were bolted to the wood with an amazing number of bolts. The lid was uppermost—if I could find a crevice for the point of the bar I could force it open in a second or two. It was easier to open than I had expected the ancient rust to permit. With ear-splitting creakings and groans I got it up, and the interior of the safe lay open to view. I bent over it—to find it empty! At the bottom a little sand or fine gravel invited me to take it in my fingers—it was not sand nor gravel. I tossed it in my palm—it was gold dust. Then I sat down in the soil, beside the chest.

It had been full, that chest—full of gold. It *had* been. But a thief had been before me. My head was in a whirl.

Doctor Bernard's words of warning came painfully to mind. To be too intent upon such a quest, to be too absorbed and expectant, might mean inability to withstand the shock of failure. I was feeling the impact of a heavy blow, and everything swam in false colours before my dizzy eyes. Failure. Blast Doctor Bernard!

Everything had depended upon this—everything. That was not my fault, was it? Keeping up my big house—offering it, a worthy home, to Katherine—visiting Katherine in the West and asking her to marry me—these things had de-

pended on finding the treasure. And the treasure was not found. So the house and Katherine also were lost.

Robbers had taken it away. This was the place where Wilton Mortimer had hid his gold to save it from the Indians. My conjectures had been right. Was it possible that his murderers knew of this island and that they had subsequently visited this place and removed the gold? It was possible, but was it likely?

I fell into this train of thought and followed it, like a sleeper in a dream. The robbers! Who were they? In a flash I tried to picture red-skins landing at the island, approaching this spot, digging up this box—Bah! They would not have re-buried it! Not Indians, then. Perhaps someone else had fallen on this idea that the gold was buried here. Somebody who had received the story from Michillimackinac about the motive for the murder. The Mortimers never lived in Detroit — Montreal had always been their home. Who was it in Detroit that had sent on the story of Wilton Mortimer's death? Somebody from Detroit, perhaps, had robbed me. Could it have been the man who wrote the letter I found in our safe in the library at home? There! I had hit upon a likely culprit. I might go to Detroit, if only out of curiosity, and if I found that family and found them rich—I would know who had my gold. Ah, well, why sit here brooding, like Job, in the dirt?

As I rose the chest received a savage and un-

necessary blow from the crowbar in my hand. A deep sigh tore my breast as I climbed out of the hole. I had entered it in high hope of fortune—I emerged in despair. With heavy feet I returned to the dingy and began the return journey.

Arriving at the pier-head the boat-man caught the side of the boat and to his evident surprise I threw out the shovel and the crowbar.

"Been fishing with those things, Mr. Mortimer?"

"No. Digging for gold."

He laughed incredulously, of course. It was as well to tell him the truth as not. He was less likely to believe the truth than a lie.

Few people were to be seen, for it was the lunch-hour at the Chateau. Up to my room I passed and changed my clothes from linen to flannel. Down to the dining-room I went more from a sense of duty than because I had an appetite. It was half deserted, and as I sat alone at my table, it appeared to me that neither of the Campions had been to their places.

"Have either of the other gentlemen been in to luncheon?" I asked our man.

"No, Sir," replied the waiter. "The young Mr. Campion is sick."

"Oh, has he not got up yet? I must go and see him."

With that I immediately went to Arthur Campion's room. There I had another surprise—I was not welcome. Perhaps my feelings were too sensitive at the time, for certainly I had not

noticed, all the time we were together on the island, that he had disliked me.

"Mr. Campion, I'm awfully sorry not to see you on your feet. I knew you were not up to scratch yesterday, but I thought a night's rest would have set you up again."

"Did you?" was this handsome young man's curt reply, looking up at the ceiling.

"I suppose you will get up this afternoon?"

"I don't know."

Well, that was rather chilling. But I tried again.

"I have not seen your father to-day," I said.

"Neither have I," said he.

"What? Not seen him? Is he sick as well as you?"

"Father is never sick. He's gone to Port Dalzell."

"Gone to Port Dalzell?" I exclaimed. "Whatever has taken him there?"

"The Daws, of course."

"Oh, he's gone to call on them. Very polite," said I.

"At least I expect he's gone there. He said something about going over there, last night, and so I suppose he has gone. I was sleeping this morning and I suppose he looked in and thought he wouldn't disturb me."

"Yes. Those Daws are very fine people, aren't they?"

"Very," replied Arthur. "Are you going over to see them?"

"I? Well, really I don't think so. I hadn't thought of it."

I sat staring at Arthur Campion in bed, with eyes averted from mine. The Daws. Ah, an idea! The Daws came from Detroit. Why not go over and ask them if they knew a rich Stewart family in Detroit? I sprang up.

"Why, I think I will go and call on them," I said. "I hope you'll soon be better, Mr. Campion."

The clerk could tell me about Port Dalzell. It was a long way by road, he said, but why not go by water? The big motor-boat often took people over there. An hour's run.

I went down to the boat-house and engaged the big boat for the trip to Port Dalzell, with the boat-house keeper himself to drive her. He was surprised that I was not taking a party of people with me. What could a man want to go out for all by himself in a boat that had room for twenty? That must have been the thought in the man's mind, but he was not so impertinent as to mention it. He talked freely of the adventure of the day before, and told me of all that had been done to signal Station Island during the night of our stay there. Fires had been built, as the watchers supposed, in reply to our fires. But we, comfortable within the solid walls of our roofless house, had known nothing of them.

"Now, where do you want to go, Sir?" asked my man, as we entered the mouth of the river.

"I want to go to the Daws' cottage, wherever

that may be. I think it's at the mouth of the river.

"Perhaps this is it."

"Yes, stop here, and I'll land and find out."

There were two or three little summer houses built of attractive split logs, near to a small landing platform. I stepped ashore there, and approached the nearest cottage.

My attention was arrested by a girl's voice singing a familiar song. That was Nancy Daw for a certainty, somewhere just out of sight. Crossing the little verandah to the open door I knocked. Immediately Mr. Daw appeared. In a few minutes we were seated animatedly going over the never-to-be-forgotten story of our late sojourn on Station Island. I rather liked the man, in spite of his almost extravagant vivacity. He was honest, reliable and frank. It was the easiest thing in the world to come to the point with him. Besides he was specially favourable towards me. So, after warm greetings, and observations of surprise at seeing me and my kindness in coming, he told me that they had planned to pay a visit to Baubee Bay on Monday. They hoped, he said, that I would honour them with a visit soon in Detroit.

"I shall be delighted to come," said I, "but I shall not be able to do so for some time. This is just a flying call, you know. I can only stay a few minutes."

"Oh, Captain Mortimer, fiddlesticks! You'll stay to tea? Send that boat—that six-cylinder leviathan—send her home. We'll take you back

in our boat after tea. Do now! Look you—I can borrow a motor-boat from a neighbour, and directly after tea we'll take you back to Baubee Bay.—Now!—Why the girls will be furious if you don't. You simply must!"

This was quite contrary to my intention, but the slightest sign of wavering on my part settled the question in favour of his proposal. For, after all, I did not need to rush back to Baubee Bay. The change and the company might do my drooping spirits good. The big launch was therefore dismissed, and went humming away. Mr. Daw and I sat smoking and talking till tea-time.

"Has Mr. Campion been here to-day?" I asked, for there was no sign of him.

"Mr. Campion here? No. Was he coming?"

"Really? That is strange. His son told me he was coming over to see you. He must have misunderstood his father."

"We would have been delighted if he had come. What a fine man he is! His son too."

"His son is still quite ill."

"Is he? Oh, dreadful!—Yes, we must go over on Monday."

The girls now appeared, both radiant, and seemingly unaffected by their recent trials. Having planned an early evening meal they withdrew to prepare it. Mr. Daw sent his little boy with a message to a friend to engage his launch and returned with a satisfactory reply.

"Mr. Daw," I now began, "Do you know a Stewart family in your city?"

"Several, Sir."

"Of course you do. I wonder if you know one I am interested in."

"M-m-m. Might. What can you tell me about it?"

"It is old. A Stewart was in Fort Detroit over a hundred years ago.

"Well, that sounds like my partner's family."

"Your partner?"

"Yes. His name is Stewart. His great-grandfather was a fur-trader. He has a great collection of Indian curios."

"Is he rich?"

"Rich? Oh, my! Yes.—Rich in humour—rich in brains."

"But is he wealthy? Was his father or grandfather wealthy?"

"No, Mr. Mortimer. No. My partner is the first in that family to go ahead. I don't think his grandfather died worth a dollar."

"Do you know if his grandfather or great-grandfather inherited great wealth?"

"No. I am certain neither of them did."

"Well, perhaps your Stewart family is not the one I mean," said I, perfectly sure that it was, and a little comforted that I had not found it guilty of theft.

Our ride that evening was pleasant enough, except that the disappointment rankling in my own breast must have made me a poor companion. The boat was slow, and when we reached the Chateau dock the daylight was gone. Fortunately

the moon would help the Daws on their return trip. I said farewell to them and, without pausing to speak to anyone I saw, repaired to my room. There for a while I sat in darkness and listened to the music of the jazz below stairs. Then I rolled into bed and into unconscious sleep.

Sunday morning. When I went down to breakfast I was informed that a clergyman was coming to hold a religious service at eleven o'clock. I promised to be present.

"How is Mr. Campion, junior?" I asked the waiter.

"Went away yesterday, Sir," was the reply.

"What! Gone?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, Sir."

That was all the waiter could tell me. I went therefore to the office to make further enquiries.

"Is it true that the Campions have gone?" I asked the manager.

"Yes, Captain Mortimer. The elder man went on Saturday morning, and his son followed him in the evening."

"But that is strange, isn't it?"

The manager looked at me enquiringly.

"I don't know, Captain Mortimer. It may strike you as rather strange. They went before their time was up, and there may be something unusual in that. We hotel people are used to the eccentricities of guests. Now, Mr. Campion spent the first afternoon he was here tapping those ornamental rocks out there with a hammer, and chipping off little bits. He's a geologist—and

when people wanted to know what he was doing, he said he was smashing a glacial theory—ha! ha! Yesterday morning he departed suddenly without notifying us."

"What! He went as suddenly as that?—But his son did not know he was going!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, I think he must have known. He said, last night, that his father wished him to pay the bill and follow him."

"Then he must have heard from his father. Why, I saw him—Mr. Arthur Campion—in bed in the afternoon. He had not seen his father all day—not since Friday night. He could not tell me where the man was, unless he had gone to call on the Daws at Port Dalzell. Now, I was over to the Daws' cottage yesterday and Mr. Campion had not been there."

"Then, Captain Mortimer," said the manager, "you are justified in saying the departure of Mr. Campion was strange."

I discussed the matter with him no more, but took a walk around the grounds with another man. The minister of religion arrived, and I went into the ball-room to his service. The service consisted of extemporaneous prayers, hymns, readings from Scripture, a sermon, and a collection. I was one of the few men who attended it—a convincing proof of the impotence of religion without discipline.

It was in the afternoon that the gloom of disappointment that had appalled my mind for twenty-four hours was partly dispelled. I met

with a chambermaid in the corridor outside the room Mr. Campion had occupied. Having spoken to that maid before, for sake of speaking, I paused and said:

"Well, the Campions left you in a hurry?"

"Yes, Sir," said she, nothing loth to gossip, "I haven't touched either of their rooms yet."

"Well, you wouldn't do anything to-day, would you?"

"No, Sir. This was the older man's room," said she, with a key deftly opening a door.

"What a pleasant room," I said, stepping in, "I had no idea there was such a room in the house."

"Oh, this is a lovely room—it's the best in the Chateau."

"Why, Mr. Campion must have been in a great hurry," I said, for soiled linen was in sight," "and—hello! Look at that coat—by the powers!" I shouted.

There, protruding from a clothes' closet, were the coat Mr. Campion had worn on Station Island with other garments. The last time I had seen that brown Rajah silk coat had been at the moment when its owner tore it off, to dive into the water and swim to the life-buoy, by which we rescued him. He left it on the island therefore—how had it come here? Mr. Campion, senior, had been back to the island to get it! A most startling and interesting discovery.

There was no doubt about it. I took it up and examined it thoroughly, and identified it by a tear

in a pocket which I remembered. Like a man in a dream I sought my own room, my head singing with excitement. There I sat down to think out, in conjecture, what had taken place. I pieced together the truths that I knew with the secrets they involved.

On Friday afternoon, then, Mr. Campion had been accidentally left alone on the island, all the rest of us being taken off by the launch. Being left he consoled himself that the rescuing party would return for him when the weather subsided. At no loss for an occupation he fell to examining the structure of the island, and when prying about in the ruin came upon the bed of ashes beneath the chimney. That I had been digging up those ashes he could never have guessed from their appearance. Had I been able to tell that anything had taken place on my second visit to the island? I had noticed nothing. He was a resourceful man and he made himself a small wooden shovel to facilitate the work. He found a few ancient nails, such as I had, among the ashes. They seemed to promise something better further down. Deeper and deeper he delved. He removed many a big stone of the unhewn kind, and, what were very interesting, several large, shaped ones, like those of which the building was composed. His curiosity was aroused. Why should building stones be buried beneath the hearth in such a meaningless fashion? Then he had come to the iron chest, and his labours could not be checked. Scooping out all round the chest to a depth of a

foot or so he could see that the lid was uppermost. With a boulder he proceeded to pound its unwilling sides. Rust had sealed the joints all round the edges of the lid. The hinges were so stiff and solid as to be like cast iron clamps rather than hinges. He therefore first broke the hinges, heaving great blows at them with big stones. One at a time they were cracked. After that, little by little, he moved the lid from its position. Then his great strong hands and arms came into play. He gripped like a vice the edges of the lid, he strained like a draught horse at the weight of it. To and fro he rocked himself. Again and again he lost hold and renewed his grasp. It gave at last—he lifted it. The chest was open. One moment to breathe—and then, what had he unearthed? To the very top it was filled with a granular substance, reddened somewhat by the deposit of hydrated iron. He knew what it was before he proved it by examination. Rubbing some of it briskly on a stone made it glitter with the unmistakeable yellow gleam of gold. He had found a great truasure. What should he do with it?

He very quickly saw that he might have difficulties if he allowed it to be known by the people at the Chateau Royal. It would be wiser to keep secret what he had discovered. He therefore partly filled in the hole he had made. Then the launch arrived. When told to leap into the water, and swim to the buoys thrown out for him, he tore off his coat with alacrity. My companions in the boat would agree to that. He left his coat behind

him on the island—yet now it was here in the Chateau. So he had recovered it on his return to the island. I remembered that we retired quite early on Friday night. Mr. Campion was not disposed to talk to me or to anyone else. That was his way of hiding his own excitement over the great find. After all was quiet, however, he got up and stealthily made his way to the boat-house. The moon would be set by one o'clock, but so much the better. The water was now fairly calm and he knew the channel into the landing place at the island. From some unknown source he had provided himself with bags. At the boat-house he broke the lock and took out a boat. He reached the island before three o'clock. In an hour he had transferred the gold to his boat, replacing the chest and its covering of ashes as he found them. Like a smuggler Mr. Campion had landed his cargo at a suitable spot to be removed later. Then, to cover his tracks, he had returned the boat to its place with great care. After that he had found it necessary to go to his gold—my gold—and convey it further away. Where to and by what means? That was the question.

As far as this could I follow the acts of Mr. Campion with comparative ease. But I could get no further—think as I would. I was sure of what had taken place up to that point—the bringing in of the empty boat and replacing it in the boat-house. Where had he gone after that? Well, I must have more data or I should never trace him. Where would more data be had?

I got up and lit my pipe, feeling as if I had been working strenuously for a long time and needed relaxation. It was about four o'clock—why not go for a walk round the Chateau grounds? I set off immediately with this intention. Rather aimlessly perhaps I followed the wide driveway around the building, which eventually brought me to the rear yard, and face to face with George, the half-breed chauffeur. He was seated on a low box outside the garage, ruminating with his chew of tobacco in his cheek.

This taciturn man would never have spoken unless I had addressed him, and this I well knew. But, shy man of a shy race, he actually wanted to tell me something, as it afterwards appeared. An Indian awaits an opportunity.

"Well, George, you have not much to do on Sunday?" I began. After the usual pause he replied.

"No."

"Did you go to Church this morning?"

"Yes."

"I didn't see you."

An Indian may be slow to speak, but his eyes are always quick to respond. He looked swiftly at me.

"You don't go to my Church," said he.

"Don't I? Which Church is that?"

"Catholic."

"Oh, how far away is it?"

"Fourteen miles."

"Fourteen miles is a long way to go to church. You don't go over there very often, I suppose," said I.

The man did not quite understand my remark.

"I was over there yesterday, too, in the car. That time I took Mr. Campion," said the Indian. I gasped.

"You took Mr. Campion 'over there'—yesterday—Saturday morning!"

"Yes."

"But where did you take him?"

"To the Junction. He wanted to get a train to connect with the noon train for the west."

This was rich information. I was nearly choking with it. I sat down beside him.

"Why! I don't know why he should do that. There is a train on the line that runs through Baubee Bay Station that connects with the transcontinental."

"Well," said George, "I guess he didn't want to leave from Baubee Bay Station."

"Ah! I guess not. Why, now—didn't you know the Chateau Manager wanted to know about Mr. Campion? Why didn't you tell him?"

"Mr. Campion fixed me so I couldn't tell the manager. He just gave me ten dollars to take him to the other junction. If the manager knew that I took one of the cars out without orders I would lose my job. Mr. Campion knew that, too."

"And yet," said I, "you tell me."

"You won't tell anyone," said the brown man.

"No. I won't," said I, thinking hard.

"What time was it when you made this trip?"

"About half after five."

Yes. That would be the time, by my previous calculation, that he would have returned from the island. But the question was, where had he deposited his treasure?

"Are you always up at half-past five in the morning?" I asked.

"No. He called me. I sleep in this garage."

"And he said 'Take me straight to the Junction,' did he?"

"No. He said, 'George, get me two or three boxes, quick,' and I got him three small boxes."

"What!" I hissed, perspiration starting from every pore, "So he took baggage with him?"

"Yes. And he had his suit-case."

"Well, what did he have in the boxes? Did you see?" I asked.

"Oh, yes."

"You did! Well, what?"

"Specimens."

"Specimens?"

"Yes, specimens."

The word had no meaning in this man's vocabulary.

"But specimens of what?" I pleaded, moisture dripping from my brow and chin. Phew! What a hot day!

"They were heavy and tied up in handkerchiefs."

"Well.—Did Mr. Campion say he was coming back?"

"No."

"What was the last you saw of him?"

"He was sitting on the boxes waiting for the train."

"You think he has gone west, do you?" I asked finally.

"He did not say where he was going," was the man's final reply.

I rose from my sitting posture and thrust a hand deep into a pocket, looking around to be sure we were unobserved.

"Now, Mr. Campion gave you a ten-dollar bill to prevent you telling anyone you had taken him away. Here is another to keep you from telling anyone that you have told me about it."

He nodded. His eyes shone. I left him.

Five minutes later I was buying a cigar from the clerk in the office.

"I want my account up to to-morrow's breakfast, please," I said.

"Oh, are you leaving us, Captain Mortimer?"

"Yes. I want to catch the eight-fifteen."

"The eight-fifteen going north? Very well. Do you want your money out of the safe now, or in the morning?"

"In the morning. I shall want breakfast at seven."

Later in the evening I accosted the manager in the wide hall.

"Look here," I said, "I am going away, but I shall be back some day. I want to tell you some-

thing nobody here knows. I am the owner of Station Island, and I—"

"Indeed, Captain? You own it?"

"Yes. I came here to see what it was like."

"Well, now you know what it is like. Ha! ha!"

"Yes. Now I know."

"You made a closer acquaintance with it than you intended to, I suppose. Did you buy it?"

"No, I inherited it.—I was going to say that I object to guests from the Chateau or people from anywhere else landing on the island without definite permission from me."

CHAPTER VIII

HOT ON THE HEELS OF A THIEF

WINNIPEG, the metropolis of the prairies! I had not seen the city since before the war, and although progress in most places was suspended by that great diversion of energy, tremendous new buildings had risen here. The streets presented to my eyes improvements which indicated unshaken faith and untiring industry. There had been some labour strikes that had become extremely serious affairs, but they were over, leaving to the strikers the results of their struggles, both sour and sweet. The railway station on my arrival was thronged with well-dressed people, some leisurely moving to and fro, others hurrying with great haste. The representatives of every nation of Europe and Asia were to be seen in a short time, but no longer did strange native costumes appear. Appearances, however, are often misleading, and were very much so in this case. Winnipeg had suffered, not as European cities, of course, nor even as some Canadian cities. But she had undergone a change of heart.

"This, then, is the home of Katherine!" I thought, on stepping from the train, and I kept

my eyes on the alert for a possible sight of her. I was not sure, having neglected newspapers lately, if she would be home or not. I chided myself on my neglect to notice the shipping arrivals at New York. It was quite possible she would spend a few days in New York or Chicago before proceeding further west.

I came face to face with a shipping office. Here was a chance to glean information. Entering, I asked if the Cunarder Roumania was in at New York. A girl at the information desk consulted an authority through her telephone. No—she had been delayed by ice. How disappointing! To be in Winnipeg and not to be able to see her. Perhaps, however, I could finish my present business and be free to wait for Katherine's arrival. If I began to dwell on Katherine too much it might deter me somewhat from my primary duty. Let me keep in view what had brought me so suddenly to the west. I was hot on the heels of a thief! Maurice Campion was my enemy, and one who might prove to be beyond all power of vanquishing. I must put into action, if I would run him down and beat him, all my faculties of mind and body. A keen appetite set me thinking of a hotel. Where should I go? A porter, hanging upon my heels with my three pieces of baggage, was to be discharged at once for economy's sake. As I surveyed him a bright idea flashed into my thoughts.

"Where do you want to go, Sir?" said he, puzzled by my indecision.

"Go?—Ah, I know what to do! Bring those things for me, quick, and get me a taxi."

At the hotel I selected there was a motley crowd of men and women, mostly uninteresting people. Having become installed in comfortable quarters I lunched in great haste, with my mind full of plans for quick action. I must pursue Campion without the loss of a moment of time. To take refreshment seemed to be wrong, only that I felt I must be fortified against whatever was before me. Now that I was in his home city it might be merely a matter of visiting him at his house, and intimidating him into restoration of what he had stolen. But I had come to Winnipeg on a very slender excuse. It was only a guess. Was it not just as possible that he had gone east from Baubee Bay? Might he not, even now, be in Nova Scotia? Well if I could trace him to the ends of the earth I would follow him. At present I was seeking a scent of him. Once let me really get on his trail!

Somehow I felt that I needed an assistant. Not a confidant, but a servant. Twenty-seven hundred a year does not admit of many luxuries, especially if you have a big property to keep up, as I had. My mother's money was only an annuity during her life-time, and so I was poorer by her death. Just now I had more ready money than usual. It might be a very great help to hire a good car and chauffeur, by the day, so that I could fly about as I wished. This was what I thought as I left the hotel rotunda, never supposing that I would have to hunt for Mr. Campion far beyond the

confines of the city. I went to a large garage and engaged a powerful car and picked a trusty-looking man to drive it. Now to learn the address of Mr. Maurice Campion, thief, of the Manitoba Geological Survey. That was how I described him to myself. Thief. He might not know that he was classed with the criminals, yet no doubt as to his status, morally, existed in my own mind. If he were an honest man how could he have acted as he did? He knew well that he ought to have made known his discovery of the treasure when he found it. What would he have stood to lose if it was his by right of discovery? If it had been shown that he was not the rightful owner, then, as an honest man he would have been happy to restore it. And what person, in such a case, would not have rewarded him substantially? No doubt he preferred to risk no chance of claims from the unknown proprietor of Station Island. No doubt he was a thief. Let me learn his present whereabouts and I would charge him to his face and demand my own. Likely enough he was disposing of the gold even then—if I could catch him red-handed! Of mining I knew little. I knew he would be asked, at an assay office, where he got his dust. If he refused to say he would bring down suspicion upon his head all the more. Then I could appear and tell the place of origin, and also the name of the owner of the place of origin—in fact, the whole history of the treasure, going back a hundred and twenty years, was in my possession. Here I was at the Parliament Building.

Entering the Mines Department I wondered if I would come face to face with Campion. I half hoped I might meet him, it would be so much time saved. He could never suspect that I was on his trail.

"I want to see the Deputy Minister, please," I said to the attendant, giving my card.

The attendant came back to me with the usual answer to callers at Government Offices.

"The Deputy Minister is engaged. If you will write to him about your business he will be much obliged."

"I don't want to see him on any business," I replied firmly, "Go and tell him I am coming in for a minute."

It is useless to dally in Government Offices.

"Go on," I said to the man, pushing him before me.

Clerks and typists in an inner room looked up in surprise. A glass door bore the title: Deputy Minister. Into that room I made my way, not too rudely.

"How do you do, Sir? My name is Mortimer. May I ask you a couple of questions?"

"I can give you two minutes. What is your business?" said a gray-haired man at a desk.

I took a seat to which he waved me.

"Will you be so good as to tell me if you have in your department a geologist named Campion?"

"Mr. Maurice Campion?" said he. "Yes."

"I met him down east, and had a very pleasant time with him and with his son. We were at a

holiday resort together. Now I have come to the west, I shall be glad to be able to call on Mr. Campion if you will kindly give me his address."

The head of the department, a man of very intelligent appearance, had not even laid down his pen on my entrance. He looked at me with keen questioning eyes.

"If all you want is Mr. Campion's address why do you need to come to me?" said he.

I saw that I must be careful if I was to get any information worth having from this man. Of course if all I wanted was to know where Campion lived I could have consulted a directory with immediate success. But that was not all I was after.

"If Mr. Campion is the man I believe him to be," I said, with carefully chosen words, "he will be of great use to me."

The Deputy-Minister laid down his pen deliberately, and leaned back in his chair.

"Mr. Campion has been a highly valued surveyor in this province for many years," said he. "Some of the most important explorations ever carried out in the interior of Canada have been conducted by him. He is, besides, a very conscientious man, and a man of splendid character. Now is that what you want to know, or can I be of further service to you?" He almost smiled.

"Thank you very much, Sir," I replied, "You tell me more than I ask."

"I don't think he is in the city. He is on his holidays just now. I can tell you in a moment."

Taking up his telephone receiver he gave a number.

"Mrs. Campion—The Deputy Minister is speaking. Good morning. How are you to-day?—Ah! How very disappointing in such lovely weather.—But you'll be able to go now.—Oh, I thought so.—It was just what I was going to ask you. Will he be here this week?—Oh, at the end of the week.—Thank you. Good-bye."

"No, he's still down east. He went to fetch home his son from an eastern university and will be home at the end of this week."

"He is not in the city yet?" I exclaimed in surprise, "I saw him—I was staying at the same hotel as he was—and he left, as I supposed, to come home."

"Well, he is not here yet. You are ahead of him."

"So it seems," I said, nonplussed by the news.

"You want to get in touch with him personally?"

"I have to see him!" I exclaimed emphatically.

I rose to leave. The Deputy Minister rose also and moved to open the door for me.

"You will let me say," said he, "that if you are an agent from the Dominion Government, or from some other province, and you are going to entice Campion away from us, I shall be very sorry."

At this I preserved a discreet silence and a stolid face.

In the outer office I took the opportunity of looking at a telephone directory and noting Campion's

number, and his address, which I found to be "24 Stroud Terrace."

Now, spying, eavesdropping, disguising—all the arts and wiles of secret-service agents, detectives, and plain-clothesmen are repulsive to most people. I hate deceit, and I loathe shams. But we all agree that such things have their places in the duties of our police forces and intelligence departments, and some of the best of men have had to practise deceit on occasions. The amateur, playing a double part for the first time, feels painfully guilty of dishonesty, even though his object is honourable. Behold me, therefore, in a theatrical costumier's trying on a wig or two, to say nothing of a hoary beard!

Having arrayed myself in false hair I observed my amazing appearance in a glass—with disappointment. No. Whiskers would not do. A man of six feet in height and measuring thirty-nine inches around the chest is conspicuous enough without the embarrassment of a false beard.

"If you are looking for a disguise," said the man who served me, and who, I thought, took me for a police-detective, "there is nothing that makes so much difference as a pair of spectacles and a strange hat."

Taking the expert's advice that is what happened to me—I wore a pair of gold-rimmed glasses and a short-sighted squint. On my head I jammed a soft hat with an absurdly small brim. My ruddy skin was concealed beneath a wretched pallor induced by the application of a

yellow grease. In the mirror I beheld an utter stranger—certainly not the Richard Mortimer of Station Island.

"Here! Get out o' that!" almost yelled the chauffeur as I was getting into the car that waited in the street.

"What?" I cried, pausing.

"Get out of this car," he repeated—"you hobo," he called me—"Get out before I call a cop."

Of course I could not help laughing, which apparently deepened my disguise. The man jumped to the curb, and seized me by the arm, and obedient to his impolite demands I stepped out again.

"Why, whose car is this?" I asked innocently.

"Never you mind. You beat it!"

"Won't you let me get in?" I pleaded.

He stared at me, and looked puzzled and uncomfortable.

"Now, don't you know who I am?" I said, and then it dawned on him.

"Well! Gosh!—I didn't know you, Sir."

"You didn't? Well, that's fine! I don't want anyone else to know me. Drive me to the Stations."

Having acquainted myself with times of arrival of transcontinental trains from the east I decided that there were two which I must meet, one at 6 p.m., and one at 10 p.m. It was only the middle of the afternoon as yet and I had to pass the time as best I might. I was an hour or so in a public reading-room, and, in a small restaurant—because

in my disguise I could not return to my hotel—the chauffeur and I sat down to a hearty meal.

"How long will you want me?" he asked.

"I have no idea," I replied, "I may have to dismiss you suddenly or I may be able to give you an hour's warning."

Six o'clock came and the bulletin board announced the train half an hour late. That half-hour was a terrible wait. How to see everyone who came off that train I did not know, but trusting that luck would help me I watched the doors as they crowded through, glancing only at tall men. When they had all passed, many being greeted by waiting friends, I was about to turn away, when Campion appeared. He was plainly avoiding possible acquaintances, showing none of his former geniality with all and sundry. Striding forward, his panama turned down all round, a club bag in his hand, he made for a taxicab. It was with the greatest difficulty that I made for my car without taking eyes off that taxi.

"See that car?" I hissed to my man, "the third in the row from here. Keep your eyes on it and follow it."

"I'll try."

We whirled out into the swirling traffic of Main Street.

"Get up close," I said, "and make sure of him. Now can you see the man? Well, mark him."

When the little car turned up a side street we fell back. After a short distance it stopped while we slowly passed it. Campion was paying off the

man. At the end of the block we stopped, and I got out and turned back towards him. He met me face to face without looking at me. When he was well past me I glanced over my shoulder to see where he went. To my surprise he had disappeared, and I again turned to retrace my footsteps. He must have entered a store. Which one—among these grubby establishments? No time was to be lost. I walked into a second-hand furniture store—not there. I stepped into a clothing store, a badly lighted place, smelling of cheap dyes and half tanned leather. The store was crammed to the ceiling with goods, and the floor space was blocked with stands, fixtures and shelves. As a prospective customer I was pounced upon by a guttural-voiced creature with a sensual face.

"A suit you want, eh?—A suit? Here's a goot ting—cheap! Nineteen tollars!"

Bah! Was this the place where Campion was clothed in his elegant flannels? Yes, there was Campion, half-hidden behind a pile of something, buying something. It was enough to know that he was there. I hurried out of the store, to the loudly-expressed dismay of the Jew.

"Turn round and stand on the other side of the street," I said to my chauffeur, "against that garage.—Watch for that man coming out of the store."

It took Mr. Campion a long time to make his purchases. When he emerged he was hardly recognizable. Indeed I would never have known him but by his size. Why, the man was an actor!

He had changed his carriage and his walk! I beheld a slow-footed, bowed, rather elderly, working man. The only incongruous thing was the light-leather bag he carried. Whither now, Mr. Thief?

At the street-end he took a street-car and we followed him back to the railway station. There I followed him to an express office where he handed over his bag. I dare not go near enough to overhear the name of its destination, and I could not wait to enquire for it, after he had gone, lest I miss him forever. Out on the street he sauntered about aimlessly, as though he had to wait for time, and it was difficult to shadow him, for in spite of his dull-witted manner I knew him to be as alert as a fox.

In a public garden a band was playing, to the pleasure of crowds of people. There Mr. Campion, queer man, sat to the very end of the concert. I had to stand so as not to lose sight of him. Surely there was something very pathetic in this fact. In his own city, where he probably had hundreds of friends, he sat in a park alone.

At 10 p.m. the music ceased and the crowd withdrew. Mr. Campion made for a tobacco store and acquired a supply of the comfortable herb. Then for an hour I ran the risk of being found out as a detective while he studied store windows. It was after eleven when a most tedious evening became a most exciting one. With no change in his demeanor Mr. Campion took to street-cars again,

and we, with our big car, hunted him a mile or more.

"That man is going to bring off something," I said to my chauffeur, "and in case I have to leave you suddenly here is your money up to midnight."

It was half-past eleven. Mr. Campion was strolling, or rolling, along a fashionable street on foot, becoming, if anything more and more leisurely. Automobiles becoming less frequent I was afraid my car moving so slowly would attract attention.

"Stay here," said I, "and let me out. If I am not back in twenty minutes go home. Good-night."

The rubber heels of my shoes made me as silent as a cat on the cement paving. Keeping close to the houses, even where people still sat on their verandahs enjoying the cool of the evening, I tracked Mr. Campion a whole block. He was not suspicious of being followed, and I marvelled at his boldness. Trying to catch up with him round a corner I thought that I had lost him, but while I waited in despair, he suddenly crossed the roadway a hundred yards ahead. A clock somewhere rang out the hour of twelve. It was necessary to run quickly across the lawns to keep up, and when I reached the place where last I saw him I found only a dark lane traversing the rear of big houses. The difficulties of stalking my quarry were greatly increased by the darkness. To keep him in view was quite impossible—I could only hope to hear him or to get an occasional glimpse of him. So crouching in the dirt I peered into the dark alley

and listened intently. Creak! He was climbing the board fence—yes, I could see his dim silhouette going over the top, twenty yards from me. When I heard the thud which told of his descent on the other side I hurried forward and looked over the fence at that spot. Mr. Campion was climbing another fence into the next garden beyond, so I climbed over myself, and I prided myself that I made less noise than he had done. Looking over the second fence I surveyed the rear yard of a tall building, evidently an apartment house. From the basement to the top cornice it was illuminated, here and there, at some of its windows. The yard was paved with cement which enabled me to distinguish the forms of a few objects—a bicycle leaning against the wall, a few shrubs in tubs, and the light from a basement window displayed a large grey cat licking himself with great ardour. Zigzagging down the side of the building was a fire-escape stairway of iron that reached to ten or twelve feet from the ground. This fire-escape was hardly discernible and I only guessed its nature. Had I not expected to find a fire-escape there I would never have known what it was on such a black night.

Where was Mr. Campion? He had not had time to get out of sight or hearing. The ground seemed to have swallowed him up. Should I climb the fence and grope in the dark corners for him? Instinct warned me not to take a foolish step, and I waited. The more I waited the more I became convinced that Campion was still in the yard

and probably only a short distance from me. While time passed slowly and painfully the situation I occupied appeared ridiculous. What was I doing, in disguise, at dead of night, standing in an unknown back-garden, watching a cat? What was it for? Why was I there? And then the cat moved. That helped me and relieved the suspense. The cat moved and I thanked the cat silently. Its ablutions were brought abruptly to a close in that movement. For something or someone in the shadows had alarmed the cat—his whole body crouched with fear, his ears were askew, his legs were spread ready for flight—and he glared towards the darkest quarter of all, beneath the fire-escape. So I was not wrong—Mr. Campion was crouching there.

It must have been nearly one o'clock when he moved again. The lights were mostly extinguished, including the basement light, but a gleam still showed where the halls and stairways ran through the house. What I noticed was the swish of a rope. Then I knew instantly what it was, and at the moment wondered if I had made a mistake and was tracking a mere burglar. For the man, whoever he was, was throwing a lasso over the lowest part of the fire-escape—he wanted to enter the building by that means! Was it Campion? I would follow him and see. He got up, and when I knew by the soft sound of his feet on the iron steps that he was at the third floor I followed him. Half way up I stopped and endeavoured to see what he was doing. He was opening a window, and

that being done with difficulty he entered the building. What ought I now to do? The light suddenly came on in that room and I knew what to do. Up I went quickly and quietly, and cautiously peeped into a small luxurious study. Mr. Campion, in the disguise I had seen him acquiring, was opening a filing cabinet with a key. He moved with great haste, taking out quantities of folded papers and selecting one or two. I was at a complete loss to know what he was about. He seemed to know his ground well, and yet spent some time in his search. Having got what he was after in a flash, to my disappointment, he switched off the light and turned to the window. To get down to the ground again without his knowing of my presence was an impossibility. I bounded upwards four steps at a time. One, two, three strides I took, and stopped, crouching low. Mr. Campion himself made enough noise to cover mine. When he was well down the iron skeleton-steps I followed. He dropped quietly to the ground and then I lost sight of him. My eye was on the board fence where he had climbed into the yard and he evidently went out by another direction. When I got to the bottom of the fire-escape I felt in vain for the rope. Campion had taken it with him and I could follow him no further, not fancying so great a drop in the dark with no softer ground than cement to light upon. At the first floor window I looked in, and judged by the aid of a dim light that I was looking into a corridor. What was more easy than to leave the building by

the main entrance? The window was open and it was an easy matter to crawl in. Telling myself that the law requires the street-doors of apartment houses to be unfastened at all times, and that I was a late caller leaving, I strode forward towards the stairway, passing the silent elevator cage. Down two short flights and I was in the main hall. I glanced this way and that seeking the door, and that questioning motion betrayed me. The ponderous bulk of a short, thick-set night-watchman, broom in hand, suddenly interposed itself between me and the door. The man was a veteran soldier and a cockney and by the glint of his eye I knew he prided himself on his alertness.

"Now then! Whatyer doin' in here? Eh? Wheredyer come in? Eh?"

This was disconcerting to a degree.

"Mind getting out of the way?" said I, attempting to pass.

I might as well have attempted to walk through the wall.

"Wait a minute, boss. You don't get out o' this building so easy as that. Now what's yer little game?"

"Get out of the way, man! I've been calling on friends. Do you think I'm a burglar?"

"Burglar?" said he, "Well, p'raps you are. Who've yer been callin' on? Eh? Muddy. Think I don't know what yer perfession is?"

Mud on my clothes! I glanced down in dismay. Yes, I was very dirty, and this was a very clean and fashionable establishment, evidently. An ex-

planation was obviously necessary, and it was demanded. But I was not going to offer it. Boldness was the only course and I took it.

"You can't stop me going out of this building, you fool!"

"Oh, can't I? You'll bloomin' well see! I'll get the cops.—Stand back!"

He gave me a forceful push and I realized what power there was in those muscular arms. But a violent push is rousing, and it roused me to anger. The thought that I might be handed over to the police, and the whole matter, including my queer disguise, made public in the police-court next day was enraging. I played a wrestler's trick on the solid little man. With a swift movement that puzzled him I dropped to a squatting position, throwing my arms around his legs, at the same time pushing forward and rising. In an instant I had thrown the fellow, broom and all, over my shoulders. I hope he fell on the mat. He was a dutiful little person and it was a shame to treat him so, but I had to get out and away without delay. How I tore down the street! At the corner I halted under the trees, and walked, knowing that I must excite no more suspicion by haste. Glancing at the name, I read, to my surprise, "Stroud Terrace."

"Stroud Terrace," I said to myself, turning the corner, "Is it possible Mr. Campion has been breaking into his own home,—24 Stroud Terrace?" I longed to go back to make sure by learning the number of the house I had just left, but

it was not safe to attempt it. So, very much discouraged and very much puzzled I made my weary way back to my hotel, discarding the spectacles on the way. The dreadful hat I removed and carried in my hand as I entered. Without plans of action for the morrow, without a sense of having accomplished anything of value, I crept into bed, very tired, at two-thirty in the morning.

A long, dreamless sleep was the natural result of a long train journey and a chase after a thief, and it was nine o'clock when a servant roused me by entering my room, withdrawing quickly at sight of a sleeping occupant. I got up very leisurely, without thought of breakfast, making a most careful toilet. It ran in my mind that I ought to visit the Deputy Minister again. He was Campion's chief, and if Campion turned up at the office would know of it. If he was in Winnipeg while pretending to his wife and to his department that he was out of the city there was an important reason. If he stole papers from himself there was an explanation to be made for it. Where was the gold? What had he done with it? These were the questions I wanted answering, until I had Campion in a corner I could do nothing. The worst of it was that I had no proof nor even evidence, beyond what was circumstantial, that he had taken my treasure from Station Island, or that there had been any treasure for him to take.

Ten o'clock. Time to find out if Mr. Campion had gone home. I telephoned.

"Good morning! Is Mr. Campion home?"

"Mr. Campion is out of the city," said a very gracious and musical voice.

"What a shame," flashed through my thoughts, "that any gentle lady is connected with that hypocrite."

"I thought Mr. Campion came back to the city yesterday," I ventured to reply.

"Oh, no. I heard from him this morning," said the lady, "and I do not expect him for a few days yet."

I closed the conversation at that—So he was still playing at vagabond in his own city! What a man!

Since there could be no harm in visiting the Deputy Minister again I made his office my next goal. On arrival there I was told the same story as before by the young man who pretended to take in my name to him.

"The Deputy Minister is so much engaged that he is unable to see you, but if you will write to him he—"

"Just see if the Deputy Minister is in his room, will you?" I said, "and then you can tell your story to somebody else. Be quick — I'm in a hurry."

He paused in surprise, laughed, and went obediently. When he returned he informed me that the chief was not in the building, but had sent a message to the effect that he would be there all afternoon.

"Is Mr. Campion here?" I asked.

"No, Sir. Mr. Campion is in the east."

"Fine man, Mr. Campion," I suggested.

"Oh, Mr. Campion's great," was the warm response.

"Yes. Do you know his son?"

"Yes.—Well I've seen him here sometimes."

"Pity Mr. Campion's so hard up, isn't it?"

"Hard-up?" querried the boy.

"Yes. It's a pity he's so badly off."

He looked at me in surprise a moment, and then swallowed my bait.

"Mr. Campion isn't badly off. He's rich. He's the richest man in the department."

"Is he? Really!" said I.

"Oh, yes. He's got a lot of land. Perhaps he hasn't much real money, but he owns land. When he sells it he'll be wealthy. You see, he knows where the good land is and he bought thousands of acres from the Hudson's Bay Company."

"Farm land, I suppose?"

"Yes. And grazing land. He has a ranch at Vanista."

"Hasn't he got some mining lands?"

"No. Well, he may have. We have not much in the way of minerals in this province. And if there is anything that is any good Mr. Campion knows about it."

The unqualified approval of Campion that underlay these remarks was more than I expected. Was I the only person that had found him out in a dishonest act? It tempted me to expose him, only I saw no advantage in such a course. Was it

possible that he and the Deputy Minister were in league? Ah, there was an idea! If I called in the afternoon I would have it out with the Deputy Minister, and settle some of my suspicions.

The junior clerk was willing to continue the conversation, I could see.

"You know," said I, leaning familiarly across the desk, "the best of men have sometimes accidentally got mixed up in a shady land deal."

"Very likely. But Mr. Campion never did. He's too smart for that kind of thing. He told us in here one day about what he did with two men who tried some game on him."

"What was that?" I asked, innocently.

"Well, they tried a bogus deal on him and he saw through it and he tied them up so they have to work for him now. He makes them run a ranch for him."

"Really! Does he ever go to the ranch himself?"

"Oh, yes. He goes sometimes."

"Where is that ranch?"

"Near Vanista."

"Vanista? Is that the place?—Well, I had better see the Deputy Minister this afternoon. Will you do me a favour? Put my name on his desk. Here's a card. Tell him I will be here at three on an important matter. Will you do that? Thank you."

As I left the office I said to myself:—

"Vanista. I don't know if that is worth remembering or not, but I won't forget it.—Ah me! I'm hungry."

CHAPTER IX

LOVE AT LUNCHEON

AFTER a plunge beneath the water a man rises irrepressibly to the surface and to the air. After a holiday in the wilds a man returns gladly to the routine of civilized life. So after following Mr. Campion through the streets at night like a beast of prey I pined for the society of fellow men in broad daylight. I debated with myself as to whom I should hunt up. Which of all the people in Winnipeg who had known my own family in their eastern days, would be most congenial? None like the Johnston-Fullers, of course. They had been intimately connected with my people when they lived in Montreal, and I remembered them with most grateful feelings for help rendered to my mother as a widow, and to my brother and myself as soldiers. If I did not go to their house soon it would seem most ungrateful after all their kindnesses, and I would rather have gone to them than to any other people in the city. To the Johnston-Fullers I would go for lunch.

Had I telephoned before I started out both they and I would have been spared a surprise. But the fact of it was I had it in my head that I ought to

buy a wedding-present for the daughter, Margaret, who had been married in my long absence from the country. So it was on that account that I dawdled about the shops looking vainly for a suitable gift. It was about one o'clock when I got to the house. A man who admitted me was a strange servant: my name and face were nothing to him. In the drawing-room I waited, as he went to inform the lady of the house, conscious of much talking in another room.

"Oh, Dick Mortimer! My dear, dear boy!" cried Mrs. Fuller as she rushed in, "How splendid of you to come. We heard so much about you, but never heard from you."

"Oh, Mrs. Fuller," I replied, touched by her warmth, "You know I've written to you ever so many times."

"Ah, yes, from France, but not since you came home."

"I've only just come home," I protested.

"Oh, my dear, I'm so glad to see you. It is such a pleasant surprise. You are just in time for luncheon. We have a little party here—in Margaret's honour—she's here, you know. We were just sitting down. But let me call George."

She flew and called her husband.

"Why, Dick! Hurrah! How are you, laddie?" he burst in, "Had no idea you were coming to see us. Come along to the dining-room. You're looking fine."

"Yes, Dick, there's a charming friend of Margaret's here—at least she's going to be a friend,

I hope. She's just back from England, too. You will fall in love with her, at once. Then there's the Bishop," said Mrs. Fuller, "Come along, they're waiting," for I hung back.

"But Mrs. Fuller, I'm not very tidy. If you've got special people here I had better—"

"Oh, George, take him to a room and bring him back quick."

I was to stay at their house. My baggage was to be sent for. They insisted that I had come to stay for a visit, and I gave in to them.

My host led me into the dining-room whence the merry din of a feast in progress came with the clatter of dishes and plates.

"I'm sorry to have left you," began Mr. Fuller in a loud voice to his guests as he went before me into the room.

"I've apologized for you already," said Mrs. Fuller, "and I've told them about Captain Mortimer. George, I've made a place for Dick over there."

There were twenty people at the table, young and old, and evidently the affair was an important one. The Fullers were always famous hosts, and a crowd was not uncommon in their house. They had but one child, a daughter, who had married a university professor. In consequence of the quiet nature of her marriage it had been intended to celebrate the occasion, so far as food and drink were concerned, after the war. The time had come. In a series of luncheons, dinners, and evening parties friends were being gathered

to pay her homage. Before I took my place at the table, while Mr. Fuller strung off names as he introduced me—names which I could not hear for the babel which never ceased—I shook hands only with the bishop and with Margaret and her husband. The Johnston-Fullers induce enjoyment among their guests with unseen power. Sometimes almost obliterating themselves, they never cease to control everything. The secret of the success of their affairs is in the discriminating choice of their guests—no jackals or pariahs are met under their roof—and also in the skill they exercise to circulate everybody present. No man talks to the same woman for one hour at a two-hour At-home of theirs. Mrs. Fuller was never guilty of match-making—or, more correctly, she was always guilty of it, she matched and mated everybody, and then re-matched them over and over again. She had prepared a place for me between the bishop and a young girl, not that I might court either the clergyman or the woman. After the meal, whatever next was on the programme, I knew that I would never be beside the same persons as just then. The bishop seemed to be thinking my thoughts.

"It's always "Marjorie-move-all" in this house," he was saying.

"So it is in your house, my lord, by the way you keep your clergy moving," someone was replying.

I took my seat, the bishop acknowledging me with another smile. The girl, on the other side of

me, was for the moment engaged with her neighbour. What a magnificent head poised by her shapely neck above incomparable shoulders! She had turned, so that I gazed at her massive tresses, rich brown, contrasting with her pearly skin. What was the name Mr. Fuller had given her? I should have to ask her. This was all seen and thought in a flash. Then she turned and faced me with a blushing cheek and dazzling eyes. It was Katherine! I gasped, and she, though she had the advantage of preparation, was no more composed than I was.

"Katherine!" I burst out, "Miss Dunbar!—Is it possible!"

I could have taken her in my arms, so overjoyed was I to see her.

"Oh, Captain Mortimer, I never dreamed of meeting you here. Are you better? I'm very glad to see you."

I never expected to meet with Katherine in this way, unprepared and unwarned. I thought she was still nearing New York. My information about her ship had been wrong.

"When did you get here?" I asked.

"Only yesterday," she replied.

"I imagined you were still on the sea."

"Oh, I came on the Mauretania and made a very quick trip. When did you come to the West?

"Just an hour ago."

"You—you are perfectly all right, are you?" she asked, blushing uncontrollably.

"All right? Yes, I'm splendid," I replied, at a

loss to know the cause of something strange in her manner. Was she cool or was she coy?

Not even the Johnston-Fullers noticed that Katherine Dunbar and I knew each other previously. Everybody seemed to talk to everybody, and yet it was plain to be seen that all eyes were upon Katherine most of all. Her unexpected presence upset all my plans. Yet conscience warned me to revert to them after lunch. I had told Mr. Fuller that I must be off on urgent business immediately. They were all going to a tennis-tournament for the afternoon. I told Katherine I could not go, but in the circumstances it was not possible to give lengthy explanations.

"I thought you were having a long holiday," she said, "but you seem to have cut it short and to have plunged into business."

"I would gladly tell you all about it," I replied, enjoying her beauty even more than my squab, "and I'll tell you if I can speak to you before I go. Only you must promise to keep a secret."

"Oh, don't trust me with any secrets," was her astonishing reply. For she said it without smiling.

"But this is a very special secret just for you," I said, "Wouldn't you care to know what brought me so suddenly to Winnipeg?"

"Oh, you are hot after something, I suppose," she said.

"Hot?" I exclaimed, "Yes, I would like to tell you how hot," for it ran in my mind that I was hot on the heels of a thief. Such kind of pursuit

is not to be betrayed by excitement, and I flattered myself that mine was all suppressed.

"Yet you seem fairly cool about it," said Katherine.

"Yes, I have to keep cool in order to keep my head. I must not lose it, you know, having lost so many things."

"Have you had losses? I'm so sorry to hear it," she said, turning her lustrous eyes full upon me with genuine concern.

"Well, I have a great deal in the balances," I replied, "and everything seems to depend upon one thing."

"Captain Mortimer!" cried someone, "Do you think there will be war between the United States and Japan?"

"No," I said, briefly, to a silly question.

"That is a sane answer," said the Bishop. "Why do people suggest that the Americans and the Japs are two malevolent nations?"

"Ah, but didn't they used to say that Germany was a peace-loving country?"

"So she was—a piece-loving."

"Now she's in pieces."

"Well, can't we get up a war somewhere?" started another, "Just a little one. What about Spain and Morocco."

"What about England and Ireland?" said another.

"Oh, there is war there—has always been."

"Yes, but always on one side—Ireland makes

ceaseless war on England, but England never makes war on Ireland."

"That's England's mistake. She never conquered Ireland in the first place. And now its too late."

"Yes. Ireland is a full-blood that has never been broken."

"Do people realize the comparative insignificance of the Irish problem? The population of Ireland is less than that of many an English county."

"Do you think that Ireland ought to be broken?" said a pretty girl with flashing eyes, evidently a native of the Emerald Isle.

And so on. Under cover of such chatter I tried to say a little more to Katherine.

"I had a wonderful find when I got home," I said.

"Did you? What sort of a find?"

"Property."

"How interesting. Where did you find it?"

"In our safe."

"Property? In a safe?"

"Yes. Documents, you know."

"Oh, I see," said Katherine, "documents relating to property. But that is not property, is it?"

"Yes. I found I owned something of which I had never known before. There was a title-deed. It was in the name of my grandfather, and I came to the conclusion that my father had never known of it."

"How exciting for you. But could you claim it

now? I mean wouldn't the government have confiscated it on account of taxes or something?"

"Oh, there was no trouble about getting possession of it. It's an island. I found it to be exceedingly valuable. Only I'm having difficulty now. A double-dealing villain has robbed me."

"Robbed you?" exclaimed Katherine, laughing heartily, her brown eyes dancing, "How could anyone steal an island?"

It was my turn to laugh.

"I wouldn't have minded so much if he had stolen the island. It was something on the island which he has has taken."

"And can't you just hand him over to the police and get it back?" said Katherine, showing more and more interest.

"Oh, there's the difficulty. I am certain that he is the thief, but I have no direct proof that he has taken it. I am seeking evidence now. I had an awful time last night."

"Is that why you have come to this city?"

"Yes. But you are not asking what it is that has been stolen," said I.

"But you said something about a secret."

"Well, don't you want to know the secret?"

"I have no right to ask you."

"Its hard to tell a secret to an unwilling listener," I said.

"Do you want me to be a prying person? Besides, a secret is no longer a secret if it is told to a party unconcerned."

She was so lovely, so captivating, I longed to

take her away from the merry company at the table, and to tell her all that had happened on Station Island, to tell her that I loved her, and to ask her to wait only until I recovered a stolen fortune so that I could marry her.

"Can you not come to see the tennis this afternoon?" she asked, as though either to change the subject or to resume the conversation in the afternoon.

"I have most foolishly promised to be somewhere. I would love to go to the tournament if I could. But perhaps my duty is to stick to my present occupation," I replied.

"You mean, recovering what you have lost?"

"Yes, and then having claimed it I shall be able to claim something else."

"So you have two things you hope to get possession of?"

The ladies were rising to leave.

"Yes," I said, rising and withdrawing her chair from the table, "I hope to get possession of two things, and both are treasures."

Her eyes fell as I said this, and I wondered if she understood. Women are creatures of instinct. Perhaps she knew, instinctively, that one treasure was a precious mineral, and the other a woman's heart.

The men sauntered into the billiard-room and began to smoke. Mr. Johnston-Fuller came over to me.

"Now, Dick, if you can go and get your business done, I can send the car down-town to fetch

you out to Peter's Green at whatever time you say. We're going to have tea at the Pavilion—the whole party of us."

"Oh, thanks awfully, Mr. Fuller," I replied, "I have no idea how long I may be. I think I had better not come."

"Oh, but you must come out for tea. There will be nothing to eat in this house until nine o'clock to-night."

"I can get a tea somewhere. Don't worry about me and don't send the car after me, please."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. When we have got to the Green I'll send the car back to this house, and if you can make use of it do so. Have a cigar. You are not smoking, Bishop."

"No," replied the prelate, "I gave it up, long ago."

"Really?" said Mr. Fuller, "I remember you were smoking when I saw you at the Vermilion Reserve."

"Ah, yes. I would smoke again if I had to go among Indians."

"Did you work among Indians at one time, my lord?" I asked.

"Yes," said the Bishop, "I was eighteen years in the north."

"Eighteen years! That sounds like a good long term of service," I exclaimed.

"Oh, nothing at all, compared with the length of time some men have been in the north."

"You must be an authority on the districts you were in."

"Oh, the Government is always after him for opinions," said Mr. Johnston-Fuller, "the Bishop is an F.R.G.S."

Possibly the Bishop knew Mr. Campion. I did not think it would be wise to ask him.

"Are the Indians useful in any way, do you consider?" I asked.

"Certainly the Indians are useful. They are useful in some ways, but not in all ways."

"It's quite a mistake," said Mr. Johnston-Fuller, "to compare Indians with whites. If you want to estimate the value to the country of an Indian compare him with other Indians. I maintain that it is unfair to attempt to line up the Red Man with Europeans. Am I not right, Bishop?"

"Quite right, I think," said he—"I am not sure if I understood your question, Captain Mortimer."

"Well, what I mean was, is the best use made of the Indians?" I said.

"No," was the Bishop's answer, "because the best use was not made of them in the first place. They are spoiled, and it is too late to remedy their wrongs. They should have been our allies after the conquest of Canada, instead of which they were our enemies. They continued to call the French King their father, and they murdered the British settlers on the slightest provocation—provocation generally being merely opportunity."

"Well, what ought the British Government to have done in the early days that they did not do?"

asked Mr. Fuller, "Were they not kind towards them?"

"Oh, they were kind enough—the Indians were generously treated. The great mistake was in not mastering them in the beginning. The policy of a military occupation of this whole country was madness."

"But there was no attempt at a military occupation of this whole country, Bishop," objected Mr. Johnston-Fuller.

"There was wherever settlers or traders went. Of course that was not as far west as this at first. Throughout Lower and Upper Canada and round the Great Lakes there were small forts with ridiculously small garrisons. Those small out-posts were the scenes of many a massacre—they were tempting baits to the bloodthirsty savage."

"The 'blood-thirsty savage'," I echoed.

"Dick is thinking of his great-grandfather who was killed by Indians," said Mr. Johnston-Fuller, turning away.

"Indeed?" said the Bishop, "Then you belong to an old Canadian family?"

"One of the oldest," I replied, "though I am the last of my house alive."

"Are you really? That is sad indeed."

"Yes. Rather lonely for me," I said, trying to speak lightly of what weighed rather heavily on my mind—"Speaking of the usefulness of the Indians, you think they might be more useful than they are. Do you think they could have been more

useful in the early days? I mean, for instance, could they have helped the traders?"

"They did help the traders. There would have been no trading without them. At the present time the fur-trade depends on them."

"Well, this is what I want to know: Did the Indians withhold information that would have helped the traders?"

"Ah, now you are asking a great question!"

"Well, is there an answer to it?"

"There is an answer to it, certainly," said the Bishop, "or I ought to say there are answers to it. What kind of an answer you get to that question depends on whom you ask. If you ask an Indian he will say, No. If you ask a person like myself he will say, Yes. The Indian to-day does not know what his forefathers knew about the country. Secrets have been forgotten. In the early days they withheld valuable secrets for very hatred of the English. Now they withhold them because they have practically forgotten them. To piece together bits of Indian history, for instance, as learnt from them, in any proper consecutive order, is impossible.

"I thought their history was too much mixed up with legend to do anything with it?" said I, greatly interested in this conversation.

"All history is mixed with legendary matter," said the Bishop.

"Even Church history?" I ventured.

"Even Church history," he replied, laughing, "especially modern Church history."

There was a stir—it was time to go to the tennis tournament, and it was time I returned to my man-hunt, if I could find his tracks.

I saw the party off, and wished I could go with them. Four automobiles stood ready at the curb. There were pretty girls in the party, but the most striking of them all, as she would have been anywhere, was Katherine Dunbar. She was glorious in a simple pure white muslin dress. And I told her so, ignoring a popinjay hovering beside her.

"You're perfectly glorious! I wish I could come with you."

She gave me a sunny smile, and for one fleeting half-second pulled a button on my coat consolingly.

"I wish you were. But this is going to be a very tame affair compared with what you are going to do."

"Katherine!" I said, desperately, "When can I come to see you?"

Her reply was strangely cruel.

"Oh, you don't want to come to see me, Captain Mortimer," she said, and she stepped into the car waiting for her.

That was the last of Katherine just then, and I left with a queer mixture of feelings. She was as loveable as ever—I was transfixed with passion so that my very heart ached. She was as beautiful as ever, nay more so — so that my very eyes smarted with pleasure at the sight of her. But I was conscious also of distrust in her attitude towards me. She liked me less, perhaps, than I had

been led to believe. A horrible thought for a man in love—not rewarded. Who was that masterful creature hanging about her when they started off? A rival of mine? Perish the thought! But perhaps he was worse—not a rival, but an accepted suitor. I groaned in misery, turning rather aimlessly down the street, my thoughts filled with the dread of this possibility. For when I came to think of it a queenly girl like Katherine would have what are called the best of chances in the matter of matrimony.

Looking at my watch I realized that if I was to be at the government offices by three I must hurry. As a matter of fact haste was useless to get me there by the time I had said to the clerk in the morning. The Deputy Minister was at the entrance as I arrived, perspiring greatly. He, a complacent rotund person, in a brown silk suit, was cool and smiling. He acknowledged me with a nod.

"Now, don't say you want to see me," he said.

"Are you just going?"

"Just off to a tennis tournament. I'm waiting for friends in a car."

"Why I've refused an invitation to that tournament to come and see you," I said.

"Have you? What a pity! Well, can't you come in to-morrow?"

"I don't know. I'm rather at sea about something, and I thought I ought to see you about it."

"What's the trouble? Anything about Mr. Campion?"

"Yes."

"Well, if you're wise you'll take my word that he's all right. There's nothing wrong with Maurice Campion."

"Look here, Sir. I'm not from Ottawa or any government department."

"Oh, I know that. I heard all about you last night. You are a son of the late Mrs. R. W. Mortimer of Montreal. I met your mother once. Very sorry to hear of her death. She was a widow a long time."

"Did you know my father?"

"No, I just met your mother somewhere, I forget where.—Well, why should you worry about Campion?"

"Did you see him to-day?" I asked.

"See him to-day? No. He's out of town just now. Didn't I tell you that yesterday?"

"Yes, you told me that, but—I thought I saw him last night."

"Did you? Perhaps you did. Go inside and telephone to Mrs. Campion and make sure."

"I've done that. I telephoned to Mrs. Campion this morning and he was not home," I said.

"Well, then, doesn't that settle it?"

"Not if I saw him last night," I persisted.

"But did you? You must have been mistaken. Where do you think you saw him?"

"I saw him come off a train. He avoided people and did not quite look himself. I wanted to speak to him, and followed him. To my surprise he went

into a Jewish clothing store, and when he came out he was disguised as a sort of labourer."

The Deputy-Minister smiled incredulously.

"You say he did not look 'quite himself—" neither was he himself. It was someone else you saw."

"Will you do me a small favour?" I said resolutely.

"Well, I'll see."

"Will you ask Mrs. Campion where her husband is to-day, and then telegraph to see if he is where she thinks he is?"

"Oh, I suppose, I could do that. Here's the car for me.—George! Wait a minute will you? I have to go in a minute."

We went into his office and he communicated with Mrs. Campion.

"Mrs. Campion," said he, after preliminaries, "Where can I get your husband by telegraph at the present moment?—Yes, I want to telegraph.—The Patricia, Montreal? Thank you."

The Deputy Minister turned from the instrument to laugh in my face.

"There! You see how wrong you are."

"But not yet," I protested, "I am going to verify that address."

"You don't believe Mrs. Campion, then?"

"I am not doubting Mrs. Campion, am I?"

"You are doubting Mr. Campion then?"

"All I am doing is settling a matter in doubt," I said, "I am going to telegraph to Montreal."

"To what end? Why should it matter to you

where Mr. Campion is?" said the Deputy-Minister, growing rather impatient, and no longer cordial.

"My intentions are perfectly honourable, and perfectly fair to Mr. Campion. It is most important that I should see him, and the sooner the better, both for him and—all parties concerned."

"Who are you?" demanded the Deputy Minister peremptorily.

"You said just now that you knew all about me," I retorted.

"You may be an impostor. I've not seen your credentials," he said contemptuously.

"I can give you a reference," I said, "You can apply to Mr. Johnston-Fuller, President of the Fort Garry Pulp Company, for all you would like to know about me."

"Don't know him."

"He's one of the richest men in the West."

"I don't know him, and don't want to know him, and I don't want to know anything about you."

It was plain to me that this gentleman had lost his temper. How foolish I had been to work him up to this pitch! No longer would he be of any assistance to me.

"Will you telegraph to Montreal to see if Mr. Campion is there?" I asked, rather hopelessly.

"Certainly not," he replied, striding for the car that awaited him.

"Then will you allow me to use your name for that purpose?"

He paused with a foot on the automobile.

"So you would commit forgery?" he growled, with a face the colour of red brick. I laughed lightly.

"Not at all, Sir. Only I understood you to agree to telegraph to see if Mr. Campion is where his wife thinks he is."

"Very well, you can do that yourself, and let me know the result," said the Deputy-Minister taking his seat.

"I may see Mrs. Campion about it first," I said.

"Don't you dare to go bothering that lady about it!" he roared as the automobile started.

I laughed loudly, but it was not the expression of my real feelings. A dreadful fear lest I was on the wrong track was gripping me again. What if the safe in the ruin on Station Island had never contained gold? What if Mr. Campion really had gone east when he left Baubee Bay? What if the man I saw last night, taking papers from a drawer was not Campion—? Oh, but it was Campion. Nothing could dissipate the certainty of that identity. I would telegraph myself to that address and prove it. So to a telegraph office I hastened. This is what I handed in, the time being 3.50 p.m., reply prepaid.

Manager, Hotel Patricia, Montreal—Have you guest Maurice Campion?—Richard Mortimer, 249 Kalendar Road, Winnipeg.

Then I went to call on Mrs. Campion at 24, Stroud Terrace. This I was able to do in the Johnston-Fuller's car which was only waiting to serve me. A delightful excuse for calling on the

lady was buzzing in my head. It was quite likely, however, that on so fine an afternoon she would be out. Arriving there I bounded into the open doorway, already familiar to me through a nocturnal visit, and without a pause stepped into the elevator.

"Third floor, please.—Was there an accident here last night?"

"Accident? No."

"Didn't some man fall down in the entrance-hall and hurt himself?"

"No. I never heard of it," said the operator—"Third."

I should have telephoned to Mrs. Campion from the ground floor before ascending, but I had not thought to look for the house telephone, nor for the directory of tenants. Therefore I asked someone in the corridor for the Campion's door. There I knocked. A maid opened it with alacrity.

"Mrs. Campion in?"

In a moment I found myself in a most charming room. The softest lavender tones on the painted walls and ceiling gave it a fine air of freedom and space, and the Chinese carved black chairs and the ebony baby-grand piano were works of art. Linen curtains, stencilled with sunflowers and gladioli, waved in the breeze at the open casement-windows. A few water-colours hung here and there. A book-case caught my eye and I bent to read titles. What treasures! Ancient copies of English and French books in richly-tooled calf bindings! Editions de luxe! My fingers itched to

be at them. The Campions were tasteful people, and apparently they were wealthy. Why should Campion take my gold?

A tap on the oak floor behind me caused me to turn quickly, and to remember my errand. A sweet, white haired lady, with the aid of a stick, was very slowly making her way across the floor. At once she paused, in some surprise.

"My maid made a mistake, I think. She took you for someone else.—You wished to see me?"

I was charmed by her voice and manner, and if my admiration showed in my face I could not help it. I knew that I was in the presence of a woman of great culture. Dressed in black, but for the old lace about her shoulders, she looked like one of the masterpieces of Rossetti. What a shame that this gentlewoman should have a thief for a husband! There was a weariness in her face. Was it caused by him? But she was feeble, for she walked with a stick. It was a polished, black stick with a straight silver handle. Her right hand pressed upon it—a beautiful hand, and not that of an old woman—and gems glittered on her fingers. For all her dignity she was a pathetic figure, almost shy and retiring—was it because of a designing, dishonest husband? I fear I was staring at her instead of replying to her. But I bowed my homage to her delicate beauty.

"My name is Mortimer, Ma'am. I telephoned to you this morning to ask if Mr. Campion was at home. As he seems to be out of the city and my

business is rather urgent I ventured to trouble you again."

"Will you be seated?" she said, keeping her eyes wonderingly upon me.

She moved so slowly forward I realized she was a cripple, and at once stepped forward to place a chair for her. She took it and thanked me graciously.

"I can hardly be of any assistance to you," she said, "I cannot represent my husband in any way because I am not familiar with his business matters. I know very little of his affairs, except such as are connected with the Department of Geological Survey."

She hung her head for a moment, and I saw a likeness to Arthur Campion.

"I hoped that you would be able to save me a great deal of time, since it may be some days before Mr. Campion is home. Is it true that Mr. Campion has lands for sale?"

"Yes, I think he has. He said he would be glad to get rid of a block, about a section, I believe, in Porcupine Mountain."

"Is that farming land?"

"Yes, but I really know nothing about it," she said hastily, "It may be grazing land—I don't know."

"I should like to see it," I said, and that was not untrue, for I doubted if the shark owned any land at all.

"Of course he may have land for sale elsewhere —if you could get in touch with his agents you

could find out everything you want to know. But I have no idea who his agents may be."

"Is there land at Vanista?" I asked.

Mrs. Campion started slightly and restrained herself, as her voice showed. Vanista had painful association for her.

"Yes. There are ranches near Vanista."

"Are they for sale, Mrs. Campion?"

"I think not," she said slowly, "I was there three years ago and met with a severe accident."

"Indeed," said I, "I am sorry to hear that."

"My life was saved by a man who has become a tenant."

There was a sad, almost frightened look in her face as she spoke.

"Did you fall?" I asked.

"Yes. I was riding a horse and the horse slipped on a hillside and threw me. I was just able to cling to the steep side of a precipice until a man rescued me. I recovered after an illness of some months. But two weeks ago I had another fall, and I have to move very slowly as yet. I am resting most of the time."

"How very sad!" I exclaimed, touched by her story, and admiring a woman of her age for her horsemanship, "I hope you will soon make a complete recovery."

"Thank you. I shall be quite strong again soon."

Now I had to ask the important question which was the true motive for my call.

"I would like to see the lands at Vanista.

Would anyone down there take me round? Or does Mr. Campion himself visit them much?"

"Oh, Mr. Campion seldom goes. The fact is we are not on very good terms with some of the tenants. The one who saved my life demanded an unfair reward. I think you should not go to Vanista without Mr. Campion's permission."

"But how can I get permission while Mr. Campion is away—unless you will give it instead?"

"I can't go into a painful story," she said with a sad smile.

This seemed like the close of the interview, and offering my sincere thanks I took my leave, feeling that my visit had been hardly successful. At least as I returned to the street and got into the car waiting for me I was trying to form an opinion as to whether I had learnt anything worth learning or not. All the way back to the Johnston Fullers' house I debated this question with myself —Was Maurice Campion in league with a rogue or a party of rogues? That meant—was he living a double life?

At the house I was provided by the butler with an inviting array of good things, for it was after five, and I did not feel like going out to Peter's Green just for tea. Besides I was rather snubbed by Katherine's last words.

At seven o'clock the Johnston-Fullers had not returned although their car had gone for them at half-past five.

At five minutes past seven I was glancing at my

watch as I reclined on a swinging seat in the garden. The butler approached.

"Captain Mortimer. A telegram for you."

I snatched it from him, tearing it open, and read:—

Richard Mortimer, 249, Kalendar Road, Winnipeg. Arthur Campion left here this afternoon, Melville, Patricia, Montreal.

Arthur Campion in Montreal? Not his father, then?

"Wait!" I cried to the butler, "get me my handbag. I have to go away at once. You may tell Mrs. Fuller I am sorry to go suddenly, but that I'll be back in a day or two."

CHAPTER X

A TOWN IN THE SILVER WEST

"HOW long does it take to get to Vanista?" I enquired over the telephone of a railway information office, "and when does the next train leave?"

The reply to my enquiry was given in a quarter of a minute.

"The next train for Vanista leaves at 7.35 and arrives there at 8.17 a.m."

That gave me only half an hour in which to hire a car, get to the station, buy my ticket, and board the train, but it proved to be sufficient, for I was on her some minutes before she pulled out. Unfortunately I was unable to get a sleeping-berth and found it necessary to remain in a sitting posture all night. I slept a great deal of the time, however, and the sweet air of the prairie flowing through the open windows made up for what other comfort I missed. It did not improve my appearance, needless to say, and my first intention on arrival was to indulge in ablutions at a hotel. Descending from the train I found myself in a village of a thousand people, with rows of freshly painted frame houses, two hotels, several overshadowing grain-elevators, and a wide main street with a

broad board walk—all typical of the Canadian West.

After breakfast I went out immediately to take my bearings of the place, and having walked the whole length of the main street I had noted the locations of various buildings which might be of service to me. At the end of the board walk I found houses scattered over the prairie for some distance, approached by numerous well-beaten paths that seemed to cut up the vacant building-lots in every direction. At a well an old man was filling pails with water, and the sight of its silvery stream in the bright sunshine was an irresistible invitation both to drink and to speak. Some spirit of fun and hope awoke in me for the moment. The old man, a very clean and comely person, gave me the tin cup which hung on the pump for the use of all thirsty wayfarers.

"I am going to drink your very good health, Sir," I said, tossing it off with relish—"What good water that is!"

"Oh, it's fine water. There's none finer in the world," was his warm reply.

"I believe you," I said, "and what a grand country this is!"

The man was cordially in agreement with me. He assumed the attitude of a public speaker.

"This country, from Wandis River to Willow Mountain, is the best land in the West. Nobody could make a mistake in locating here. Anybody buying land here is wise. And I'll guarantee

you'll not find a man in the village that isn't doing well."

"Is there land for sale near here?"

"For sale? Plenty. You could get a price on any quarter-section you took a fancy to."

"Why are people all so ready to sell," I laughed, "if they are all satisfied with it?"

"Oh, why, they're glad to have new settlers come in," he explained.

"But do they want new settlers to turn them out?"

"Turn them out?" He was scornful. "You couldn't turn nobody out of this country. They're that satisfied with what they've got. Now if you want to get a good thing I've got it for you."

"Oh, no, thanks," I protested, turning away, "I'm not a buyer."

Very soon I walked into a real estate office, for all that. Bold behaviour, I knew, would help me not a little. Very coolly, therefore, I began to examine a large scale map on the wall. A girl rattled busily on a typewriter. Vanista, apparently, was hard to find on that map, and I sought her help. She burst into a peal of laughter.

"That's a map of Vanista!"

"What! Laid out like Chicago! How big do you think it's going to be?"

"Vanista is going to be a great place," she said.

Then a man approached from the far side of the room. With the smile of a bosom friend he

took my hand and shook it—and shook the whole of me.

"You're very welcome! You're very welcome!"

"Thank you," I replied, "Are you the Reeve?"

"The Reeve! Me! That's a good one, eh, Miss Brown?"

"I want to look at your maps. Which map shows Vanista on a smaller scale?" I said.

"Say," said the man, endeavouring to get me seated in a chair, "You want to see this country. I'll tell you what I'll do for you. I'll get one of the boys to run you out and show you! If you want to see the pick of the western farm land now's your chance. Why, from Wandis River to Willow Mountain—"

But I did not want that story again.

"One moment!" said I, "I must not impose on you. I only ventured to come into your office to get some information. I'm not a prospect for a deal. You won't mind, will you—"

"Mind? My dear boy, we'll do anything we can for you. So will anybody in town."

"Show me a map of the district."

"There's the township," he said, indicating the one he referred to.

I went over the wall and looked at it, the garrulous salesman continuing to place himself, his company, and everybody in the village at my disposal, until his attention was diverted by the entrance of a more profitable patron. I learned in a glance that Vanista lay in a great tract of prairie land between hills and the Wandis River.

The Wandis River, not an important stream, wound through a valley, and Vanista lay about twenty miles to eastward of it. Having noted the principal features of the map I took my leave and hurried off to carry out a programme I had previously arranged.

I had already inspected the register at the hotel where I had engaged a room, and had assured myself that Campion was not staying at that house. Now I visited the rival establishment across the street and could not find his name among the guests there. Not giving up hope it was necessary to assume that he used a false name or that he had rooms in a private house. With a great effort of courage I stepped into the Post Office, and, not showing myself too readily at the wicket, I asked for mail matter for Campion.

"Mail for Maurice Campion," was all I said.

A girl who seemed to ignore my appearance, after a swift search, handed out four envelopes and a circular. So he was here!

"Thank you." Very quickly I turned my back and departed, thrusting what I had stolen into my pocket. It was with a feeling of guilt that I hurried to the railway station. I half expected to hear a cry of "thief" raised, but, instead, I heard the oily-handed real estate agent, hailing me from his office doorway.

"Come in any time! Come in any time! Pleased to meet you!"

At the depot I took up a position where I could not be observed and drew out Campion's letters, telling myself it was a mean trick to play on him. Three of the letters had been directed, in the first place, to the Chateau Royal, Baubee Bay, and thence sent to Winnipeg, and from Winnipeg re-addressed to "Vanista." The other letter and the circular had first been to Winnipeg and then sent to Vanista by the Post office in the former city. Having learned all that I could from the outside of those letters I shot them into the little red post-box on the wall, and sat down to consider the value of my latest clue.

Campion either was, or intended to be, in Vanista. As he had not received his mail I supposed that either he could not have arrived yet, or, if he had arrived he had gone out to his properties in the neighbourhood. It was plain to see that he had planned to come to Vanista even before he left the east for Winnipeg. Not having asked anyone in this village point blank if Campion had been seen lately I thought I might begin to make open enquiries. With this intention I repaired to the real estate office to which I had a standing invitation. The friendly man, described already, shook hands with me as though he were a parliamentary candidate, leaving his clients a moment for the purpose. I devoured the big map of "Vanista and adjacent townships" until he was disengaged. Then I apologized for troubling him a second time. But my apology was needless.

"Now see here! I like you. If you think you

can't come in here whenever you want to, why get that notion out of your dome right now. I know a good feller when I see one and when you came in here this morning I says to myself, "Here's a white boy all right." And that's what I told Miss Brown when you'd gone—didn't I Miss Brown?"

Miss Brown did not seem to reply, and I got a word in.

"Are there any mineral deposits near here?"

"Mineral what?—No!—Say! Gosh! Yes, I get you—Lookit!"—he gripped my arm and dragged me to the wall—"There's the valley of the Wandis River. Its brimful of ore."

"Ore? What kind of ore?"

"Why, all manner of things."

"Metals?"

"Sure."

"Well, what metals?" I was losing any confidence I had had in this man.

"Listen. A man came into town the other day from that country — I know him well, he has a farm I sold him—and brought with him about a hundredweight of talc—"

"Oh, come!" I interrupted, "You told me there were ores. Now what ores do you know of?"

"Why man, there are all kinds of ores in the Wandis Valley. I have it from a man that owns thousands of acres."

"Who is he?" I asked the question innocently.

"Maurice Campion."

At the mention of that name I started visibly.

"You know him?" said the real estate man, "Good feller isn't he?"

"When did you last see him?" I asked.

"Oh, I haven't seen him since last year," he said.

"Oh, then, he is not often in Vanista? You don't think he's here now?"

"He may be. You don't see much of him if he is here. Kind of a high-brow, you know."

"That valley looks like an unusual piece of country," I remarked.

"Unusual? Well, I should say it is. When you get off the prairie and go down into that valley it's like going down into the Garden of Eden."

"Oh!"—I laughed—"Then it must be beautiful.

"Beautiful? There's no place like it. All rocks, hills and little lakes, with all kinds of trees and the Wandis River winding through the bottom of the valley. Its just great."

"But its not much of a river is it?" I objected, looking at the map.

"Oh, its just a small river — 'tain't a river really."

"Any good roads in the Wandis Valley?"

"Good roads? Well I should say there are. But you'd better not drive a car down there. They're too steep. You see, there's nothing you can do with them hills. The best thing is a horse. That's what's kept people out of there. It's a rough country."

"Nothing but ranching there?"

"Nothing but horse and cattle raising. Now I've got good farm land over here—"

"Never mind," I interrupted, believing I had learnt almost all I could from him, "How do you find Campion's ranch?"

"Oh, I don't know. I could show you if I went with you. He's got two sections there. I don't know if he wants to sell them."

"Ah! Well, I'm very grateful to you for your help. Its very good of you—"

"Now wait! You can't buy anything from Campion worth having."

"Oh, I don't want to buy anything from him," I said, "Good-morning."

Across the street I entered a bank and asked the ledger-keeper if he had the name of Campion on his books. Not seeming to understand me he went in search of a superior. A very polite man came forward and spoke over the glass and oak fence behind which bank-clerks stockade themselves.

"We have no one in this office called Campbell," he said.

"I beg your pardon," I replied, "What I asked was about a man named Campion. I wanted to find out about Mr. Campion's account."

That was a thoughtless question, of course, and, as a result I was confronted with the manager of the branch. He looked gravely at me, and shaking his head slowly said he feared he could give no information about the clients except to responsible authorities. This was exasperating.

"Then you acknowledge that he has an account with you?" I asked.

"I acknowledge nothing," he said.

This was futility itself. I left immediately and crossed to the other bank on another corner. Instead of enquiring if Mr. Campion was a depositor or did any business there I tried another method. Taking up a deposit slip I boldly made out an amount of eight dollars and fifty cents to the credit of Maurice Campion, deposited by myself, as though authorized to do so. An expensive ruse.

"Will you pay this into Mr. Maurice Campion's account, please?" I requested of the teller.

"You wish to pay this into Mr. Campion't account?" said he, examining the slip.

"Have you seen him lately?" I asked casually.

"I think he was here the other day," was the reply.

Now I was more sure of my ground, and proceeded acordingly. The manager's room was at hand, and the door half open.

"Is the manager in?" I asked loudly, pushing open the door and entering.

"Come in!" said a dark little man at a table, extending a hand for a shake.

"So Mr. Maurice Campion entrusts funds with you?" was my remark.

"Yes, he does," said the manager, and, jerking his head in the direction of the other bank, continued, "Was that the question you asked just now over there?"

"How did you know?" I exclaimed.

"They telephoned to tell me," this cool man replied, "They said a crook was just coming over to plant something on us."

"A 'crook'?" I queried, taken by surprise.

"Yes. So I was warned."

"But you don't seem to be taking any precautions in consequence," I said.

"Oh, but I am," said he, "I have you covered with a gun right now."

Then I knew that his left hand, thrust into his side pocket, held a cocked revolver. This was certainly laughable, and I laughed heartily.

"I little thought it was dangerous to come into a bank," I said.

"Well, what do you want?" said the manager, never moving.

"I only want to know something," said I, "Will you answer a question?"

"If you ask a question I shall use my discretion in answering it," said he.

"My name is Richard Mortimer," I said, "I have lately been discharged from the Canadian Field Artillery, and I have the rank of Captain. Will you be so good as to tell me if a man came to you lately and asked you to find room in your vault for some boxes?"

"Boxes?—of what?"

"Gold dust." There seemed to be no reason why I should not mention it.

"Gold dust?" said the manager without flinch-

ing. I could not tell whether he was taken by surprise or not.

"Why do you want to know?" he asked.

"I should like to know if it is in safe keeping," I replied.

"Are you asking if Mr. Campion brought gold dust here?"

"Mr. Campion or anyone else."

"Where would Mr. Campion get gold that he would bring here? Do you think gold is found on the prairie?"

"I know where gold is found," I replied, "and I know it is not found on the prairie."

"Well, then?"

"Well, will you tell me? Will you say 'yes' or 'no'?"

"I will say neither 'yes' nor 'no'," said the bank manager.

"That is a pity," I said, "It would do you no harm to tell me."

"Well, perhaps it will do you no good to be told."

"I am sorry," I said, "that you choose to treat me with suspicion. I hoped that you would be willing to help me."

"I am bound to act as I do about this, but if I can help you in any way I shall be glad to do so."

"Well, then, will you tell me where you think I can find Mr. Campion just now?"

"You will most likely find him in Winnipeg, or else he will be away in the wilds."

Bah! How maddening! Had I come from

Winnipeg to Vanista to be told to go back to Winnipeg? Of all foolish wild-goose-chasing this errand of mind was the worst I had ever known of. I bade a curt farewell to the bank-manager and turned my steps in the direction of my hotel. Sitting upon the verandah I watched the activities of the village and smoked my pipe. It was a very hot day, as I now realized, yet many people moved as though they could not feel it. Indeed that is one of the glories of the west, the clear air is so fresh and invigorating that ninety in the shade rarely makes men go slow. I marvelled to see men and women dressed as though in a city and according to the strictest fashions, and also to see purely western figures that might have been fancy costumes at an eastern ball. A fine car shot past and out on to the prairie. A cow-boy—red kerchief, chaps, Mexican saddle, and all—rode in at a dashing canter. An ox-team came down the street at a trot, drawing a buggy in a cloud of dust. But no sign of Campion appeared to cheer my drooping spirits. Ah, it was hours since I had been to the Post Office—I might go again and ask for his mail! But as a gong sounded I went into the dining-room and sat down with the commercial travellers, talking to them but resisting all their attempts to learn my business. Afterwards—it was about one o'clock—I returned to the Post Office. Being able to see that the girl at General Delivery wicket was not the same as formerly I did not hesitate to ask for mail for Maurice Campion. When I was handed

the same mail as I had received the first time I took it outside and thrust it into the slot in disgust. For what reason was this man having his letters sent to Vanista if he himself was not coming? I returned to the hotel considering if I should return to Winnipeg after all. How tired I was getting of my man-hunt, and how tempted I was to take someone into confidence about it. Here was the proprietor of the hotel, why not speak to him? I did so.

"You know Mr. Campion—Maurice Campion, I suppose? He has land near this town."

"Know him?" said the manager, "sure thing."

"H-m-m. Seen him lately?"

The proprietor was a very stout man and preferred to sit rather than to stand. He led me to a seat in the shady verandah, breathing heavily, before he replied.

"Say!" he wheezed, removing his cigar and wiping his face, "This is one hot day, isn't it?"

Supposing that he was about to use me for a mere companion, I repeated my question.

"Have you seen Mr. Campion lately?"

"Listen. Mr. Campion hasn't been seen since he had that row with the Jeromes."

"Well, that was years ago, was it not?" I replied, wondering if the story of the trouble alluded to by Mrs. Campion would be worth listening to. Perhaps I ought to encourage this man to relate it. But he needed no encouragement, having a voluble tongue and nothing to lose by gossip. I let him go on.

"That Campion is a queer one, isn't he?"

"I heard he was often here," said I.

"Oh, so he is, but he just passes through, d'ye see? I expect he can't bear to come in here after what happened. When he comes he gets out of the train and telephones from the station for a saddle horse from Cronyn's Livery and rides right out to his ranch. That's how it is. An' I'm not about much, d'ye see? I have to stay here and attend to business. I can't go loafing round town just to see what's going on."

"I'm quite sure you don't do that," said I, noting his great bulk.

"But listen to this. I saw Campion not very long ago."

"I thought you said he had not been seen since something happened—years ago?"

"I know I said that. But, now, let me tell you. Campion was here yesterday as sure as you're here just now!"

"And you saw him?"

"Yes, Sir. I saw him. I knew him. Let me tell you. I was up on this first floor balcony above us here just after the eight o'clock train from the east came in, and who should I see come hopping across the lots there, past the house, but Campion!"

"Yesterday!"

"Yesterday. And, oh, what a hurry he was in!"

"Was he?"

"He was. And, oh, what a disguise he had on!"

"Disguise!"

"Disguise. That is, unless it's become fashionable for rich landowners to wear dirty old clothes and dago hats. I hadn't seen Campion for three years, face to face, d'ye see?"

"I see," said I, "I see."

"Well there he was, as large as life."

"Oh, he's quite large. But what then?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing? Didn't he speak?"

"Not he. But I spoke to him. Let me tell you. As soon as I saw this long guy running I thought to myself, "Who's that? Galloping like a runaway steer—who is it?—Looks like Campion." He didn't think anybody was round just then, and he was mighty anxious to get somewhere ahead of somebody else. So when he was nearly up to me —it was all over in a second, you know—I says, "Why, Maurice!" and he, never expecting it, was taken off his base, d'ye see? He just gave one quick look up at me, d'ye see? An' he was round the corner like a deer."

"And where did he go?" I queried.

"Where did he go? Why, he's likely out at Wandis River Ranch now. But he couldn't be going to run all the way."

"No. That's certain," I agreed. "The question is what made him run just then, and take a short cut across the village. He must have been either running away from somebody, or else, running after somebody."

This conversation had put a new complexion on

the whole affair. I began to feel that I was right after all in coming to Vanista. Impatience to be off to Campion's ranch fought within me against a curiosity to learn more about Campion.

"It was these Jeromes Mr. Campion had trouble with, was it?" I remarked after a pause.

"Yep.—And Mrs. Campion. You know her?"

Who this man took me for I could not imagine.

"Mrs. Campion! Well, how was she mixed up in it. Through her accident?"

"Yes, that's how it was. Wilfrid Jerome was in love with Mrs. Campion before her marriage—no doubt about that. He used to hang around where she was like a hawk round a hen-coop."

Lest the hotel-man should become less communicative I suppressed evidence of ignorance and surprise. But it was not easy, as he talked, to withhold a few exclamations.

"Maurice Campion had been coming to see her, but he never let on he wanted to marry her. She was all ready for him, no doubt about that, and he was always making her presents, d'ye see. But, oh, he thought he hadn't been a widower long enough, or something. Anyhow, he should have told the woman, d've see. Why didn't he say, "Lookit, my dear, don't get worrying about me. Wait about two or three months and then I'll come and do it all up fine." But what did he do? He just kep' on sending them presents, and she didn't know what he was after. My land, mister, a widow doesn't want to be treated like a young one. Life's too short to fool round serenading when yer over

fifty. He ought to have said, "Mary, three months after date I promise to give you my name and fortune, valued received." But he didn't, d'ye see? Once in a few weeks he'd come down here, stay at my house, go over to Mary's for dinner or supper, leave an emerald or two, and come back to catch the night train for Winnipeg. Well, Wilfrid Jerome and his brother Donald come on the scene. They were the boys! Oh my, Oh my! They'd turn this town into a mining-camp in ten seconds. Ride in at the gallop, come into the bar and buy me out. Stand up bottles of rye on the bar and take shots at the necks from across the room. Generous! Kind! Why, they'd take pity on some feller up against it, bring him in to dinner and get him full afterwards."

"They must have been well off," I remarked, fearing he was getting off his story.

"What is it? Rich! Oh, no! The truth of it was they were squatters."

"Squatters? How could there be any squatters near here? All this part of the West has been surveyed for thirty or forty years," I protested.

"Yes, but they were squatters. Not that they owned any land, d'ye see? They just lived around, and well, horses do stray on the ranches, everybody knows it. A branding iron to alter the brands, d'ye see? A corral well hidden in the Wandis River Valley, d'ye see? And then when twenty or thirty colts had got collected, why, it's not so far to North Dakota and a quick market."

"Oh, I see, and how far is it to the border?"

"Thirty miles from here."

"How far is it from here to Mr. Campion's place?"

"Well—seventeen miles."

"Is that where the Jeromes are?"

"Sure. They run Campion's ranch, d'ye see?"

"And they're a bit crooked?"

"Well—they're in the horse trade. But, oh they're nothing now to what they was. There's nothing now to what there used to be. Lookit, there's only one policeman here now where there used to be two."

"Mounted policemen? I suppose they can't get whisky now, and the country's quieter."

"Well, perhaps they can't get whisky now, but they can get something they call whisky. And as for the country being quieter—you know it's nothing like as quiet."

"Horse-dealers, like the Jeromes, are quieter?"

"I won't say nothing about the Jeromes."

I mused awhile, puzzling out the meaning of what this man had told me, and trying to form a plan of action. But my companion thought he had a stable audience, and lighting a fresh cigar, began again.

"Oh, I tell ye, mister, nobody knows what Mrs. Campion went through with these two men after her."

"The two Jeromes?"

"Wilfrid Jerome and Maurice Campion. Maurice Campion—he was that handsome and clever—and had such a way of speaking, d'ye see?

And Wilfrid Jerome—he was handsome, but different—and he was a man that would go through anything to get what he wanted. And he knew no fear—he knew no fear. And there wasn't a thing he wouldn't have done for that woman—not a thing. Then it became a blood affair. It was bound to be a blood affair with two men like that in it. Mary, as everybody called her, wanted a saddle horse for herself, being a wonderful woman in the saddle. Wilfrid heard she was looking for a beast to suit her and knew her love of good horse-flesh. So he put a nice colt in her stable, all saddled ready for a lady. There's the house''—he pointed, and I saw a low, spreading white house some blocks away. ''There's a barn behind the house. Mary saw the horse, and never thinking he was a present took him out for a trial. She rode him across towards the Wandis River Valley, and that was home to him because the Jeromes had taken him from Campion's ranch. All went well, but when the lady wanted to turn, this little horse wanted to go on home. So he got troublesome, and I fear she got punishing him. And the horse was hardly broke enough for a woman. Well, he ran away with her. Now—have you ever been down Campion's road?—No? Well, it's the worst road in creation.—Yes, it's steep. An' worse than steep. It's like riding along the ridge of a house. The hill falls away both sides of the road. There's one place worst of all. She fell down there, horse and all. It's a bad trail—it's awful. Rocks all over. Fancy riding fast! Oh, my! And then

Wilfrid came along—'cause he was out looking for her. She was clinging to the side of the gully with both legs broken. Wilfrid got her up and tied her up and got her as far as Campion's old house before night and come in here for a doctor. And Campion had come in here that very day. Wilfrid saw him here in my hotel and never let on about Mary while he was waiting for the doctor. Then the doctor got his message and come over. As soon as the doctor got inside the door he says, "Campion, where's Mary?"—"What's the matter?" says Campion. "I hear she's fallen and nearly killed herself on your road, and Wilfrid Jerome rescued her," says the doctor. You never saw a man act like Campion then. "What! What!" he shouted. "Here's Jerome. What happened Wilfrid?" And Wilf told him. "My God!" says Campion, "Whose horse was she riding?"—"My horse," says Jerome, "I made her the present of a horse, and she was riding over to thank me." That was a lie, d'ye see? Well, off all three of 'em went in a cloud of dust. Well, there was only a couple of squaws at Campion's place looking after Mary. When they got to the ranch she was delirous. She blamed Campion for neglecting her and kissed Wilfrid's hands, and that's how it was, d'ye see? Maurice come back here and went whimpering and pining for days, 'cause he didn't understand. Wilfred, not knowing Maurice was still here, came in and got full, and told all the boys Mary was going to marry him. Then they moved Mary home, and Campion

went over to say good-bye to her if she would see him. And she never knew he was here till then! By-and-bye they took Mary to Winnipeg, since when she's become Mrs. Campion, and she's never been seen here since. And the Jerones—when Campion saw they were stealing his horses, and everybody's, he just 'set a thief to catch a thief', d'ye see? He took on these two brothers to run his ranch, and he holds this over their heads, that if they aren't straight he'll run them in for this business."

"I am going over to see those Jeromes," I said, rising. "Where can I get a horse? I suppose it's best to ride?"

The fat man looked at me as though he had just seen me for the first time. His eye ran me up and down.

"Going over? I wouldn't go out to that ranch on a bet. You'd better get Bob Cronyn to tell you how to get there. He'll have a horse for you. Tell him you want the baldy broncho."

At the livery stable of "R. Cronyn, Livery Horses, Carriages, Automobiles and Saddle Horses," I failed to find the proprietor of the big drive-shed and barn. An old man and a young one vied with each other in supplying my needs. Before very long I was in the saddle on a kind of mount new to me. The horse was small but he made up for lack of size in other qualities. It was impossible to despise that little beast, as it was also impossible completely to control him. He moved backwards, sideways, and even took to the

sidewalk down the main street. It made me angry to begin with, for besides shame at apparent bad horsemanship in public, I had been used to big obedient army horses that only obeyed my slightest wish. This little western animal was more mettlesome than any horse I had ever had. He laid back his ears, lowered his head, swished his tail viciously, and jumped, coming down on the same spot exactly. But he never stopped. When I got clear of the village he behaved better and better. With a vague idea of how to get to Jeromes' Ranch I rode briskly across the prairie. On every hand was spread a carpet of rich, green pasture and wild flowers, with long, broad tracts of golden grain fields extending to the horizon. Here and there I saw farm houses and buildings, and then fences kept me on the roads. As I got further and further from Vanista, houses and fences became less frequent, and grain areas gave place to virgin prairie. I followed a trail that led in a south-westerly direction with so little change that after several miles of it I stopped to consider if I was making any mistake about it. Vanista was still in view behind, with its dark red elevators, and its trim little houses. It was a chance for my broncho to rest and get his wind, and slipping the reins over an arm I let him graze while I stood looking towards the village in the distance. How wonderfully easy it is to see a great distance in the clear air of the West! Turning right about I looked in vain for the Wandis River Valley. Indeed, so alien did the idea of a valley, as de-

scribed to me, seem in the middle of the prairie that I could not help wondering if it really existed. But I mounted my biting little steed and continued the journey.

Like the French priest who, in early days, came suddenly upon Niagara Falls, I came suddenly on this valley of the Wandis. But I was not the first to see it. The trail I was following grew fainter and fainter until at length I lost it. Unfortunately I had no compass to help me and I went by the sun as well as I could. Anxious also to have a means of re-tracing my path I kept an eye open for land-marks. A small dog appeared on my left a quarter of a mile away, running parallel with me. There was the trail I had lost, no doubt, and I turned towards the dog. But the dog turned also and I checked my horse a moment in surprise. Instantly the dog stopped. In a moment he sat down, and then I knew he was a coyote. When I continued the coyote continued, and suddenly I noticed him racing as for dear life. He had smelled a feed. Half a mile on I came to the carcass of a cow, inflated in the heat, surrounded by two or three prairie wolves, scavengers of those wide plains. And then the prairie fell away from my feet like the edge of the world.

Halting in surprise I looked down upon a rare and interesting feature of the great North-West. Ages long ago a great river had flowed there between its banks, and as it rolled onward it meandered, it widened its flood-plain, forming many back-waters, creeks, and islands. It washed out its

bed deeper and deeper and by erosion it carried away more than it deposited, and in time its source failed, until, in this age, it has dwindled to a tiny stream, creeping through the bottom of the wonderful valley, which in former days it filled from side to side, a mighty volume of water. The river was hardly to be seen at all. There are woods, swamps, hills and great rocks in that valley that hide it. From the level of the prairie I looked down as into another country and climate. The opposite bank was from half a mile to a mile away, and there, at the same level, the prairie extended after this strange interruption. Between these two banks was a wide trough filled with a variety of vegetation, of geological interest and of natural beauties that presented an amazing contrast to the level lands above. For some time I sat on my horse enjoying the scene and looking vainly for a way down, for a road "like the ridge of a house," for a ranch, and for a sight of the man who had stolen my inheritance.

CHAPTER XI

A BOLD COURSE, AND A ROUGH RIDE

TO get down into that valley was no easy matter. As I rode along the precipitous edge I saw the corral and barn of the place I was seeking. A trail cut down suddenly from the prairie and without hesitation I took it because it seemed to lead in the right direction. The broncho pony objected very strongly to the change from the level prairie, and his mad antics added to the difficulties of such a perilous path. Not only was it steep, winding, and narrow, but it was covered with loose stones large enough to throw a stumbling horse to the ground. How to get down I hardly knew and it was with some relief that I found it became wider and more safe. Then it entered a thick growth of spruce, poplar, and birch, through which it was not possible to see far. Quite unexpectedly I found myself in a short narrow gorge with cliffs fifty feet high on either side. On leaving the gorge I passed out, as through a gateway, into a rich hay meadow of great extent, bounded in the distance only by the natural beauties of the valley. Wooded portions appeared mostly on the steep slopes of the banks, and a row of brilliant willows showed the line of

the little stream. What arrested my attention amid this scenic splendour was the ranch. The trail itself was clearly marked, leading straight to the house, a small red and white building with a pitched roof and a deep verandah. A man stirred on the verandah, rose, and leapt into the roadway, which ran close to the house, and advanced to meet me.

At the sight of that man I felt that I was an intruder. He walked, or rather stalked, forward as though to intercept me. When I got closer I looked upon a typical cowboy, both in dress and features. He wore a coloured bandana round his neck and a wide brimmed hat upon his head. Spurs clinked on his feet, half hidden beneath his leather schaps. His hair was black, his cheeks were hollow, his skin was tawny. He chewed vigorously, and he stared enquiringly. I would have ridden by him but that was hardly possible, for he placed himself directly before me. Without a hail or a sign he waited until I stopped, only a few feet from him. And then I waited for him to speak first, which he did quietly, after a pause.

"Where ye going?"

"I am looking for the Jeromes' place," I replied. "Are you Mr. Jerome?"

"Yep. That's me—" he laughed mockingly—"Mister Jerome. Ha! ha!—Who are you?"

"My name is Mortimer."

I did not like the look of the man. He was defiant and jaunty. Standing in the middle of the road, his hands in his belt, he blocked my way.

"Mortimer? Mister? Are ye a 'mister'?"

This was unfriendly.

"Captain," I said, wondering if I ought to answer his questions so frankly.

"Captain?—What's that? That's a queer name."

"It's not my name, it's my rank," I said.

"Rank?—Well it's a rank name. I wouldn't go by that name for a farm. What are ye? One o' these khaki captains?"

Waiving his impertinence I resolved to keep my patience and get on better terms with him.

"You have a fine place down here," I said. "I wouldn't mind owning a thousand acres of country like this. What is there for sale in this valley?"

He paused and chewed before he replied.

"Is that what you come for?"

"Well," I replied, "I heard about you in Vanista, and I knew you and your brother were the men I wanted to talk to. You know all about these lands, and the best thing I could do would be to come to you. What's the good of paying money to an office man in Vanista when I could get you and your brother?"

Then this unfriendly man seemed to become less unfriendly.

"Come on into the house," he said.

Springing to the ground I led my horse to a post and tied him. A dog appeared and nosed me, growling. Then I turned and followed into the house, a neglected and dirty place of abode.

Glancing about me I passed through the first room, stepping over the dog's bones, pieces of harness, a bottle, and a hat, amid a cloud of flies, and entered a comparatively clean room. The floor was covered with oilcloth, and the walls were freshly papered, and flies were fewer, for the window was screened. The chairs were fairly comfortable, and the leather sofa was a well-chosen article. A round polished table stood in the middle. On one wall hung a shelf supporting a number of guns and rifles. On another wall hung a photograph, but I could not see from a distance whether it was a man's or a woman's likeness. From the window I had a fine view of the valley, and the Wandis River was in the foreground.

"Guess you'd like to rest a bit?" said the man, and his tone had changed.

"Rest? Oh, thanks, I'm not tired."

"Well, I'll get the supper ready."

"Oh, don't get supper ready for me," I begged him. "Do you and your brother "bach" it?"

"Yes, we're bachelors. I'm going to get supper ready. It's 'tween five and six.—See here," and apparently from nowhere he produced a bottle of whiskey, "Put some o' that out o' sight."

"Thanks awfully," I replied, "I never touch it."

He left me and I had a moment in which to consider what I ought to do. If I stayed to supper I would see the other Jerome, and if Campion was at the ranch he also would then appear. I listened

to the steps of the one who had just left me, and by ear traced him till he was out of the house by a rear door. I heard him calling the dog at a distance. Stepping quickly and silently across the room I glanced at the photograph, expecting it to be Mrs. Campion, but it was Maurice Campion. Then I moved quickly to the door of the room and opened it, looking out into the hall, and listening intently. I could not believe there was a living soul in the house, but I determined to make sure. The rooms on the ground floor, four in number, held no one. I hurried very quickly upstairs. Three rooms there were empty but the door of the fourth was locked, and quickly I descended and waited in the clean room until Jerome returned.

"I guess I had better stay to supper with you," I said, when he appeared, "then I can have a talk with you and your brother. What you can't tell me about this country won't be worth listening to."

"Sure! Get your supper before ye go. Then ye can take your time going home," was his reply.

"Yes. I shall be very glad of a talk with you."

"Sure thing. My brother Wilfrid, he's the feller to talk. I'll take some feed to your pony when I get my kettle on. We ain't got much to eat ye know. Maybe ye're used to something different to what ye get on a ranch?"

"Whatever you have will be good," I said. "I think I'll just take a walk round outside."

"Oh, you stay right here," he said decisively.

"It's too hot to go round outside when ye don't need to."

He departed at this, to the kitchen, but I knew he was keeping watch over me all the time—just to keep me from going out of the house. Perhaps he did not want me to get the lay of the land. Perhaps Maurice Campion had given him some orders to hold any chance caller until he had seen him and learned his business. Well, he should see me and learn my business very soon now. When some minutes had passed I thought it was foolish to remain there a passive prisoner when I had only to walk out. So I stirred, and instantly Donald passed to the outer door and gave a shrill whistle, to which an answer came from a distance. What now? I stepped from the room and out to the door. The man stood on the verandah, and I stood beside him. From the barn another man was approaching. He was evidently the brother, though very different in almost every way. His bearing was more dignified and he was handsome, except for eyes which showed signs of years of dissipation. He was dressed more like a Mexican than a Canadian, and a diamond glistened on his finger.

"What is it, Donald?" he called.

"Supper-time," said Donald, and, referring to me, "This is a 'mister,' Wilfrid."

"How are ye?" said Wilfrid, ignoring his brother's impudence.

"How do you do?" I responded.

"How's the calf?" asked Donald.

"Fine," replied Wilfrid. "What did you come after?" said he to me, and I saw that he was a superior person to his brother.

"I came after you," I replied. "Your brother has asked me to stay to supper with you, which is very kind of him, and I think I'd better.

Wilfrid looked at Donald, and, though I was not sure, I thought I saw Donald wink.

"All ready, Donald?" said Wilfrid Jerome.

"Ye bet," was the reply.

"Well, let's get to it, then."

No Campion had appeared, and we went in and sat down about a greasy table in the kitchen. Fried eggs and potatoes are a staple fare with bachelors, and that was all we had.

I did not enjoy them—as a matter of fact I did not get very much eaten, for the meal came abruptly to an end, as it was bound to do. Donald Jerome was sitting on one side of the table, and Wilfrid opposite to me. Where was Campion hiding?

"Well, is this section for sale?" I asked.

Both men looked at me enquiringly.

"How could it be for sale?" said Donald.

"Why not?" said I. "If I make a fair offer to you, won't you consider it?"

"What's your offer?" asked Wilfrid.

"Who's the owner?" I asked.

Donald gave himself away by a sharp glance at his brother. But Wilfrid only looked intently at me.

"Are you the owners?" I went on.

"Yes," said Wilfrid, and there was a growl in his voice, "we are the owners."

"There's a man ranges out horses here somewhere called Campion," said I, "do you know him?"

"Who?"

"Campion—Maurice Campion."

This was a bold course that I was taking. If Campion had been to the ranch in the past twenty-four hours then he might have bought the silence of these men, and I truly believed they were his accomplices in dishonest practices. I expected the mention of his name would catch them off their guard, but they were both too good actors. They stared at each other for a few seconds.

"Is that the boy who located in 56?" said Donald to his brother.

"It is the boy whose picture hangs on the wall in the next room," I said, "Mister—Maurice—Campion. I'm looking for him. Do you know where he is?"

This was a bomb in their trench, of course, but it was, like all bombs, dangerous to throw. On the instant Wilfrid's face filled with rage. Springing to his feet, with one hand he tossed over the table between us, and cursed loudly. His brother helped him.

"What do you want? What do you want?" he yelled. "Did the Campions send you here?"

I tried to speak to them but both had become unreasonable and dangerous. If I would avoid a

personal encounter I must be wary now, and I pretended to be harmless and innocent.

"Get out of here, quick!" yelled Donald, his eyes ablaze with fury. He pointed to the doorway. Judging it wise to obey I stepped towards it—I was in the dorway and my back towards both the Jeromes when the ground rose to meet me amid a myriad of stars. It was a blow on the back of the head, but I was unconscious for only a minute. As my senses returned I knew I was being dragged upstairs by two swearing, grunting men. I fainted again for a few minutes, for the next thing I remember was sitting up painfully on the floor of a badly lighted room. I put up my hands to the bruised back of my head and held it gently until the violent pain subsided somewhat. For a few minutes I sat resting my face on my knees trying to assure myself that I was not hurt badly, and I did assure myself that at least I was not bleeding. Carefully I passed my hands over my hair and looked at them as I became accustomed to the light. They were dry and clean. Then I looked about me.

It was the room I had found locked previously, and doubtless it was locked again. Very little time could have passed since I was knocked down, as the murmur of voices below seemed to tell me. I wanted to escape without delay, and rising, tried the door quietly. It was as secure as I expected it to be. The window was apparently boarded in. Crossing to it I found the smashed glass had been replaced by rough boards fastened from the out-

side. Through the cracks of the boards I could still see the sun shining, and what nerved me most was the sight of the piebald pony tied to the fence. Turning to see what would aid me in breaking out that boarded window I noticed a black object upon the floor. Stooping to examine it I took it up—a hat! Yes, Maurice Campion's hat—the same he had worn as part of his disguise! My fingers were wet on the hand that picked it up. I held that hand to the light and the sight of it made my flesh creep—it was wet with blood! It was not my blood, for I was not bleeding, something I had already proved. If I was not greatly mistaken something dreadful had happened in that house not many hours before I arrived. Not a moment was to be lost if I was to escape a fate similar to that which had overtaken a previous victim—Campion's victim—in that very room. I flung myself at the window, where already the glass had been broken out. The boards were screwed to the frame, I thought, and heavy fence wire was roughly laced over them on the outside. Instead of making a loud noise by raining blows on them I threw myself shoulder first at the middle board. To my great joy it broke in half. I then took hold of another with my hands, and tried to work it loose. I am a strong man, but it took all my strength, after the blow I had received a few minutes before, to wrench a second board away. This done, with a certain amount of noise, I had a hole large enough to climb through. Through it I went, and lowering myself by the

sill, trusted to luck and jumped. I fell with a fearful thud on the grass and scrambled rather than ran across the road to my horse. Feverishly I untied him, hardly glancing at the house, and clambered into the saddle. Oh, how providential that the horse had been allowed to remain just there! Had he been taken away by the Jeromes I should never have got away at all. I jerked his head round, and at once he began antics like a circus mule. He reared up on his hind legs, coming down with a crash and darting off at a gallop. I was well started, lying low in the saddle when a yell told me I was missed. In a couple of minutes I would be across the grassy flat—it would take the Jeromes and Campion, if he was with them, several minutes to get horses to follow me. But they had a good chance to shoot me, and well I knew it. I could not look back for urging on my horse, but I listened for a shot. No shot was fired. They had run for horses first, knowing that my little beast could be overtaken, that I did not know the way well, and that I was not armed. So it was likely to be a race—a ride for life, and a rough one. The mere enquiry for Campion had stirred up a hornets' nest, and one must run from hornets.

The horse I was on became thoroughly alarmed from the first and did his best to cover the ground. In a short time I had crossed the flat of the valley and was mounting the slope which led between the cliffs and into the bush. Before passing out of sight I glanced back and saw a cloud of dust.

The Jeromes were starting, and I heard them yell. Urging on my broncho I yelled also, half enjoying the adventure, and began to climb the road. My horse's method of climbing that steep road was characteristic of his breed. His gait became more extraordinary as the trail became worse. He began to take it sideways in a series of jumps, with many snorts and much head-shaking. Alas, his progress became less rapid—nay, it became actually slow! My pursuers would be upon me in a moment and if they carried guns they would soon bring me down in my tracks. Even now I could hear them approaching. Plainly, I thought, this horse cannot be of much further use to me. His ability to carry me on level ground was beyond dispute, but on a rocky defile his usefulness soon ended. I struck him again and again on his flanks with my hand, and the poor beast cried out with the queer groan of his kind in protest. When we had passed from between the cliffs the trail suddenly assumed its ridge-like form and we were in the dense bush. Here was my chance to elude my wild would-be captors or murderers. Flinging myself from the saddle I turned off the trail, and dragging the broncho by the bridle, entered the bush. The ground descended steadily, and many times only the trees prevented both me and my horse from falling headlong down the slope. Some horses would have balked at it absolutely, and although progress was far too slow for any fugitive's feelings, even at the time I felt admiration for the way the broncho

kept on scrambling down hill. The undergrowth was very thick in places and when at length, on a spot where we had a good footing, I looked back, I was sure no passers on the trail above could see me. Gripping the good horse by the forelock and the nose I held him still while the riders went leaping up the trail only about two chains away. They continued shouting profanely to their own horses for which I was glad as it covered up any noise of my own. Well I knew that while they might go on until they were out of the valley and reached the level prairie above, yet the moment they realized that I could not be seen they would know where to come and look for me. And the advantage of intimate knowledge of the country would be entirely theirs. But with high hopes of escaping I plunged onward.

At the bottom of that long dangerous descent—it was a hundred and fifty feet at least—was a swamp. Trying to skirt it I got into it several times, and between helping a floundering quadruped through water, moss and mud, dragging him over fallen logs and pushing through thorny bushes—between an hour of that sort of thing—and keeping up a constant observation, I had a busy time of it. When I began to wonder if the swamp was endless I came thankfully to dry ground, and the side of the Wandis River Valley rose brokenly upwards. As far as I could see there was a fair possibility of getting up. The chances were, I calculated, that the Jeromes, not sighting me on the prairie would immediately re-

turn and search for me in the valley. There was every reason, therefore why I should regain the top of the bank and make for Vanista without loss of time. So I got into the saddle once more and rode at the slope, trusting to luck as much as to my eyes to find a path. Half way up it was necessary to dismount and resume the former method of progress, dragging, pushing, coaxing the horse. The horse's own method was spasmodic. He kept taking wild little runs which were neither easy nor safe for me beside him. Many times he lost his footing and fell, when I always hastened to get out of his way, expecting him to roll right down. Without any serious mishap to either of us both the horse and myself arrived almost suddenly on the great wide pairie. Giving the splendid beast a wind before I mounted him I looked around me. The prairie was bare except that a short distance away, around a carcass, a number of coyotes were feeding, and I remembered and recognized it as a landmark. I was not so far from the trail! Looking down into the beautiful valley, now darkening quickly, for the day was ended, I could see nothing of the ranch nor any sign of life. But that I was seen myself was almost instantly proved. A series of shots from an automatic gun rang out with a wild echoing noise. Nothing touched me, but a great brown hawk swooped past my face like lightning, upon which I bounded to the broncho's back and rode furiously to the north-east and Vanista. No one pursued me on the prairie, so they had given up

hope of re-capturing me, and my progress grew slower and slower as I reached my journey's end. Indeed it was necessary, for it was a meek and rather jaded broncho that ambled into the livery stable that night. Nevertheless I was in great haste to attend to a certain matter without delay.

CHAPTER XII

ANXIETY, AND A FRUITLESS JOURNEY

MY mind had worked quickly, stimulated by the day's adventures, and I felt that I knew what to do without further contemplation of all that I had seen and learned that day. Undoubtedly I was becoming mixed up with very daring men in the honest business of trying to recover my own indisputable property. Campion was a man with a past that was inglorious, associating him with undesirables. He was a man whose present status was distinguished, but below the surface, was full of duplicity, fraud and secrecy. His future, I was resolved, should be one of disgrace, degradation and exposure. And those who had trusted in him must be disillusioned without delay. It was my duty to bring him to justice, and, having prepared complete evidence of his guilt, to seek the aid of the law. My case against him was strengthened by the treatment I had just received. It was without provocation that I was assaulted and imprisoned by his tenants, and it was at his instigation. Following Campion from Baubee Bay to Winnipeg, from Winnipeg to Vanista, and from Vanista to his ranch, I had supposed that I was the hunter

and he the hunted. But now I knew that he was a clever rascal, watching all my movements, and decoying me into the trap prepared by his violent partners. I must be confronted with Campion at once. He should answer the charge of theft in the first instance, and secondly, explain why he had set the Jeromes on me like dogs.

To the telegraph office I went on leaving the livery stable, and although I had great difficulty in sending a message on account of the late hour and the railway company's own affairs on the wires, at about 10 p.m. I saw my message ticked off to Mrs. Campion at Winnipeg. It was intended to be a strategic message, to bring information, and ran, purposely, as telegrams usually do, without punctuation, as follows:

Mrs. Maurice Campion,

24, *Stroud Terrace, Winnipeg*:

Is husband home yet at ranch to-day I was anxious found hat blood Jeromes hostile please reply. Richard Mortimer.

Little did I know what my words conveyed, but having done this I returned to the hotel. There I was greeted by the fat proprietor and asked many questions by him. I evaded or ignored all his questions and demanded food. Then I visited a drug store and got something to soothe my sore head. And after that, rather sick of the world in general, and of some of the people in it in particular, I went to bed and slept as men can sleep only in the sweet air of the Canadian West.

"Telegram for Richard Mortimer!" was surely a cry enough to awaken me at any time, both on account of the loud voice that gave it and because I should have been on the *qui vive* for it. I took it in at the door quite languidly, asking what time it was. The reply was to the effect that it was 8.15 and breakfast "on." The sunshine poured in at the window and the window-curtains waved gently in the breeze. It promised to be a day suitable for a pleasant holiday, and a half-formed plan for an outing with a gun rose in my mind. Sitting on the edge of the bed I tore open the envelope of the telegram, which I expected to be from Mrs. Campion telling me her husband was still in Montreal. Instead, I read what was beyond me to understand, and indeed was the most inexplicable thing I had ever known.

Dick terrifying situation can you help great danger please do your best for my sake. Katherine Dunbar.

From pyjamas to a complete costume was a change I effected in two minutes. Cramming my few possessions into a club bag I tore downstairs, and meeting my ponderous host at the bottom, without a "good morning," I asked him if I had time to catch the Winnipeg train. Looking up at a clock he said I had time if I went without breakfast and ran.

"Then how much do I owe you?" I asked.

"Well, I'll have to look at the book," he began.

"Never mind!" I cried, "Here!" and thrusting a handful of bills into his face I flew for the door.

A man in a light waggon was driving a swift team past the door of the hotel and in the direction of the station. I jumped on to his waggon, and, to his surprise, giving him a dollar, said, "I want to catch the train. Get me there, there's a good fellow!" And he did. I bought a ticket and ran after the train which had started. Throwing my bag on to the rear platform I caught the brass rail and hauled myself aboard, and I'm sure all observers enjoyed my exploit.

On the train that day I read the telegram many times, putting many constructions on it in turn, but never solving its mystery. Only I thought Katherine was in danger and needed help—my help, and she was appealing to me for all the help I could render. All thought of the recovery of my lost treasure fled from my mind with the thought of Katherine in distress. Oh, if I had not been so preoccupied with Campion! Had I not neglected her in leaving Winnipeg so abruptly? An only child and an orphan, as she had once told me, she was now being victimized by those who took advantage of her unprotected position.

Such reflections made my journey a miserable one, and I indulged them to the full until I reached its dreary end. Then I found myself the centre of misunderstandings and mistakes such as rarely besiege a man all at once. But misunderstandings and mistakes involve explanations and corrections, and these swiftly followed.

Taking a taxi on arrival I gave the address Katherine had given me in her letters, "The St.

Lawrence," and with a beating heart sat back in the car. In fifteen minutes the taxi stopped before a tall and magnificent building. I stood before it dumfounded—for I recognized it as 24, Stroud Terrace, a building I had already twice entered but of the exterior of which I had taken little notice until now. Over the entrance in neat gold letters were the words, "St. Lawrence Mansions," and a prominent "24." So it was not only the abode of Katherine Dunbar, my dearest friend, but of Maurice Campion, my bitterest enemy! This discovery was not pleasing, and made me pause, but then, I thought, as likely as not, in a big apartment house, they were unacquainted with each other. So I went inside and consulted the directory on the wainscotted wall. Katherine lived, so far as I knew, with her widowed mother, but unable to find the name "Dunbar" I put myself into the hands of an elevator operator.

"There's nobody in this building called Dunbar," was his reply.

"But don't you know Mrs. Dunbar and Miss Dunbar?" I said, a great fear filling my heart. He thought a moment.

"Oh, there's Miss Dunbar—yes, I know her," and he ran me up to the third floor. There I stepped out.

"Second to your right," he said, and slammed his bronze gate with a crash and dropped out of sight.

I knocked on the door indicated, and instantly

retreated, for surely it was Campion's door? Three or four steps from the door I halted because the door was opened by a maid, and an explanation was necessary.

"I'm sorry," I said, "I made a mistake. Which is Miss Dunbar's?"

"This is Miss Dunbar's," replied the maid.

"Is it really?" said I, "Oh, I thought it was someone else's flat.—May I see Miss Dunbar?"

"Miss Dunbar is not at home," said the girl.

"Not at home! — Ah, then I wonder if her mother is at home?"

My name was taken. I stepped into the little entrance hall, and was left a moment, and then admitted into a room that I recognized. It *was* Campion's apartment! Mrs. Campion, slowly advancing, proved it. The thought flashed into my mind that I was caught in another trap prepared by Campion. What could I do? The doors were closed behind me, perhaps locked. I glanced round wondering if I was to be knocked on the head again. Mrs. Campion was speaking to me, and with great emotion.

"Captain Mortimer! Oh, Captain Mortimer! What are you doing here?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, Madam, I don't know what I'm doing here. I'm making some strange blunders, I think. Really I'm looking for Miss Dunbar and her mother."

"You're looking for Miss Dunbar? She's gone to Vanista! Oh, why did you come back here when you were needed there?"

"I was needed here," I replied, "I got a telegram from Miss Dunbar. She was in need of me. She asked me to come."

"She didn't ask you to come," said Mrs. Campion, "I never dreamed you would leave my husband if he was in danger. You have made a fruitless journey. And now, my daughter may be in danger too!"

"Your daughter!"

"I am her mother."

"Katherine's mother!"

The world went round while I stood still. I sank limply into a chair.

"Is that why she answered my telegram?"

"Yes. She is my daughter, my only child. I was a widow for many years. Three years ago, while Katherine was at school in Scotland, I lived at Vanista. You have seen the Jeromes? The elder Jerome—Wilfrid—did me a great service and wanted me to marry him as a reward—but more because of my property I think. I married my old friend, my present husband, a rich man. I have always feared that the Jeromes had designs upon him. Tell me, what have they done to him?"

But I was dazed with my discovery and could hardly make myself intelligible to her at first. Instead of answering her questions I asked some myself. By degrees we began to understand each other, but I suppressed all mention of the gold. She told me that first of all a telegram from Mr. Campion's son Arthur asking for his father had

surprised her. Then my own telegram filled her with alarm. Katherine had replied to it by her directions, and then, as Arthur Campion was not yet home, had followed her message in person, hopping to be able to direct and advise me. They were sure that the lust for revenge had actuated the Jeromes. If Mr. Campion was in the hands of those unscrupulous horse-thieves, one of whom was a beaten rival, no doubt he was in a perilous plight. But I refused to believe that he was in great danger.

"Has your daughter told you that I was in the Manitoba Convalescent Home in Edinburgh?" I asked.

"Yes, Captain Mortimer. We were up talking about you nearly all last night. And this morning, when you were starting for here she was leaving to go to you."

"How splendid of her!" I exclaimed.

"But it was for Mr. Campion's sake," said Mrs. Campion.

"Of course, of course," I assented, feeling rather foolish, "And what will she do when she gets to Vanista? She will enquire for her stepfather or for me, I suppose?"

"I hope she will go to the Mounted Police constable and that he will go out to the ranch—that is if my husband has not appeared. But you will go back yourself?—You will go, Captain Mortimer, for my dear girl's sake?"

The sweet woman was in tears.

"I will go anywhere and do anything, Mrs.

Campion, for her sake!" I declared, and then, as she looked startled at my ardent tone and words, to cover my own confusion I added:

"Personally I feel no anxiety for Mr. Campion. I think he is safe somewhere. I was the only one in danger, and I am inclined to think I was attacked under a misunderstanding."

"You comfort me greatly by saying that," she replied, "But come! I am forgetting myself!—or, rather, I am forgetting you. You must be ready for something to eat? You will take dinner with me, won't you?"

So I sat down with her immediately and partook of the daintiest little meal.

"Mrs. Campion, will Miss Dunbar stay at a hotel to-night in Vanista?" I asked, out of curiosity."

"No. She will stay with friends. We have reliable friends in Vanista and my husband stays at their house, sometimes, instead of at a hotel."

We spoke of the Johnston-Fullers and I told her that I was bound for their house next, and I planned to leave for Vanista on the morning train. As I was leaving, a photograph of Katherine, an exquisite portrait, caught my eye. I deliberately devoured it.

"Do you like it?" Mrs. Campion asked.

I thought her question was, "Do you like her?" and I passionately cried:

"Do I like her? Mrs. Campion, I love her!—Forgive me for telling you."

She was startled, but answered me kindly, after a pause.

"Do you mean that?—I referred to the photograph.—Have you told her that?"

"No. I have not dared. Will you mind if I do tell her?"

"I—I can't tell you."

"Mrs. Campion, you believe me, don't you?—Will you tell me—is there any other man—?"

"I can't tell you that either."

Finally, promising to telephone to her before I left on the next morning's train, I bade her farewell and left, telling myself that a "fruitless journey" had its sweetness.

The evening was speeding on as I reached the great door of the Johnston-Fullers' house. The door was opened by the butler, who, at the sight of me, lost his complacent demeanour, turned round, and shouted:

"Here's Captain Mortimer, Sir!"

Mr. Fuller came running from the billiard-room.

"Dick! Dick! Dick! Where have you been?"

Without heeding my reply he began to drag me into the billiard-room in a most excited way.

"Wonders will never, never, never cease! First we are deluged with enquiries for you, and then we are deluged with people seeking you, and then we are deluged with news about you and your fabulous wealth, to say nothing of endless reports about your gallantry—Here's the man, gentlemen!"

He pushed me before him into the room, and went back, calling his wife. Two men sprang forward to greet me. They were Dr. Bernard of Montreal, and Mr. Daw of Detroit.

"Dick!" cried the dear old physician, "I thought I'd never see you again. Do you know gold has been found on your island in enormous quantities? Mr. Daw found it. Aren't you surprised?"

"Captain Mortimer, I'm delighted to see you again. We came to the west on purpose to see you. Dr. Bernard has some money for you."

"Has he?" said I, vaguely, for the events of the day were getting rather beyond my powers of apprehension.

"Dr. Bernard has eighty thousand dollars for you—"

Mrs. Johnston-Fuller came screaming in.

"Dick! Where were you all this time? Such enquiries for you! And money for you! And Katherine Dunbar looking for you! You did not tell us you knew her!"

"I believe that this day's surprises," said Mr. Johnston-Fuller, "will never, never — never — *never*—be excelled!"

"Mr. Fuller," said I, getting my tongue, "they never, never will—but you don't know one half of them from your point of view."

"Come tell us, Dick."

"No! You must all tell me. I myself found trace of the gold on the island, but not the gold itself. I thought the gold was stolen and I've

been after it and failed to find it. Where was it all the time? Mr. Daw, did you find it?"

"Captain Mortimer, I thought I had a complete surprise for you, but you seem to be in the secret," said Mr. Daw.

"But it is a complete surprise for me," I said, "I am amazed to see you and Dr. Bernard here. I cannot believe my ears when you tell me you have money for me."

"Mr. Daw, tell him your story," said Dr. Bernard.

"Well, Captain Mortimer, I'll tell you one part of the story. Nancy and Nora must tell you the other part of it when they come. They'll be here soon. I telephoned for them to the hotel just now, telling them you were here.—

The story begins at our cottage at Port Dalzell a week ago, just after your visit. We went over in a motor-boat to see you at Baubee Bay, but you had gone when we got there. It was quite natural that we paid a visit to the never-to-be-forgotten island. I wanted to see it myself and the girls wanted to show it to me. The weather being very calm, and the girls sure they could find their way through the channel into the cove, we went without delay. Well, we got there, and having landed with considerable difficulty, we went all over it. Nancy and Nora and Jimmy, between them, told me the whole story of your gallantry and kindness, and also that of the Campions'. But we made one mistake. We always supposed that you yourself were merely taking refuge on

the island before you saw them. I have learned differently, since then, from Doctor Bernard here. Well, while we were exploring the island we found a hole in the old garden that at first we took for a well. It was curbed with roughly hewn stones, like those in the building. Did you know about it?—You did?—Well, what did you take it for?—Yes, I thought it was a well at first, but then I said, what would any sane man make a well on an island for, with water all round? Then I saw it was square, and one side of it was apparently caved in, but on examination it proved to be steps down to a small cellar. It was about fifteen feet to the bottom. The whole excavation was so full of grasses and brush that I could not get down until I had cleared it out. So I burnt it out. Yes, I made a fire and soon had the hole clear of obstacles. Down I went and discovered a cache. That is what it was. It had nothing in it, of course,—no food, I mean. But it had something else, a small chest containing gold-dust! Yes, Captain Mortimer, gold-dust. We put it into the launch and took it home, and kept it a secret—mind you—four of us in it, Nancy, Nora, Jimmy and myself, and it never leaked out! We were all determined from the first that it should go to you. We thought it would be so suitable a gift to take this treasure trove from the island where you saved so many lives and hand it to you as a trifling recognition of the great debt we owed you, and still owe you. So from the Chateau Royal I learned your Montreal address and away we all

went to Montreal. There was no trace of you there, though—except plenty of people who knew you. We soon unloaded the gold-dust, of course, and got credit for eighty-one thousand dollars and a little more. I'm an American lawyer but I knew the Canadian law on treasure, and I made the necessary report—in your name. I don't think the government will take any of it from you. But let me just finish my part of the story. Mrs. Devereux sent us to your friend Doctor Bernard, and we gave the receipt for the deposit to him. Then Doctor Bernard began to tell us—"

Mr. Daw was interrupted by the boisterous entrance of his three children. They shrieked their greetings, and it was most pleasant to meet them again. Nora was sweeter than ever in city clothes and Nancy as full of coquetry. I was not quite ready to look Nancy in the eye, but she took me by surprise, as seemed to be her custom.

"Captain Mortimer, have you lost the locket with the pretty face in it lately?" she cried before them all. This was a facer, literally. But it gave me my chance.

"You mean the picture of my brother's fiancee? No, I have not lost it again."

"Have you told Captain Mortimer everything, Father?" asked Nora.

"No," said Mr. Daw, "I hadn't finished when you came in."

"How far did you get?"

"I was just going to say, all our hopes of making Captain Mortimer a little grateful present

were dashed to the ground by what Dr. Bernard told us. He said you yourself owned the island, Captain Mortimer, and that is what you were doing there, looking for buried treasure. And that's all."

"Oh, by no means, Mr. Daw," said Dr. Bernard, "Dick, Mr. Daw has not told you all the trouble he took to find you. He telegraphed here and there to all sorts of people to whom I thought you had gone. The Chateau Royal said you had gone to the West. Mr. Johnston-Fuller said you had been at his house for lunch, and then had fled. We came to Winnipeg in person—Mr. Daw and his daughters kindly came with me. Here we are —here you are—and our hunt for you, and your hunt for the treasure are over."

"By no means," I replied, "Mr. Daw, I'm most grateful to you for your kindness, but I feel that the treasure was yours if you found it."

"Nonsense, Captain Mortimer. What is the man saying? Do you think we pretend to have any right to it?"

"I think you have," said I, "because it was not the only treasure on the island. There was another deposit, I believe, and it was stolen. Your find makes me think there may be more yet."

"If you think that," said Mr. Daw, "I'll go and look for it for you. But it will have to be next summer. My partner wants me back in Detroit.—Home next, girls!"

"Where are Mr. Campion and his son?" asked Nora.

"Who stole the other treasure?" asked Nancy.

These two questions were simultaneous, but we all heard them both, and to me, they sounded strangely ominous. Mr. Daw's next remark turned the subject, and explained a certain matter.

"Captain Mortimer," said Mr. Daw, "Nora asks for the Campions because Nancy wants to know about them. That is the way with these two girls—one is always playing the other's fiddle."

"Oh, Daddy, be quiet!" cried Nancy, all rosy.

"Dick," said Dr. Bernard quietly, drawing me aside, "Come away. I have a story to tell for your ears alone."

CHAPTER XIII

A CHANGELESS HEART: AND A CHANGE OF HEART

DOCTOR BERNARD led me into the drawing room, which was unoccupied.

"Do you want some money, Dick?"

"Yes, Doctor, I do. I was going to try to get some to-day."

"I brought you five hundred dollars. The balance is banked in your name. When you have time you ought to invest it carefully and increase your income by four thousand dollars and more. I never really believed you would have any results from your search. It is all a complete surprise to me."

"Well, Doctor," I replied, "if it is a complete surprise to you, what do you think it is to me? It only seems like a dream as yet. I never thought that hole was anything but a well."

"But it should be easy for you to believe what has happened," said the Doctor, "You were perfectly certain of success when you started out. Your letter written on the island, which someone mailed for you, gave me reason to think you had made certain of the treasure, and when Mr. Daw turned up with so much I thought he could never have known that you had already found it."

"But, I didn't find anything in that cache he speaks of. You don't understand, Doctor, what has happened. I found treasure in another spot altogether. I found it before any of the other people took refuge on the island, although I did not open it. I covered it over and it remained hidden all the time we were there. Afterwards I went back to the island to get it and it had been taken away."

I went on to tell him how I suspected Mr. Campion, and how I had ever since been on his trail. When I mentioned Katherine and her telegram, and her amazing relationship as step-daughter to Maurice Campion, Doctor Bernard lost his accustomed calm.

"Why don't you fly to her, man? What are you waiting here for when the girl you love—the girl who loves you—is in the hands of murderous villains?"

"Oh, Doctor," said I, much startled by his ardent words, "I hope she will keep away from the Jeromes. I'm only waiting for the next train, which is at eight in the morning. And, she may be the girl I love, Doctor, but I don't know if she is the girl who loves me."

"You don't know, you ungrateful boy?" said the Doctor, "Well, I know."

"Why, how do you know?"

"Well, she almost told me so."

"What! When? You've never seen her in your life!"

"Of course I've seen her. She came to see me

in Montreal on her way from New York. She stopped over for a day with Montreal people, travelling companions she met on the boat. She looked for you, and everybody that wanted you was sent to me. That was the third day after you left for Baubee Bay and Station Island. She was in Winnipeg before you. You must have seen her? Didn't you? Didn't she tell you she had seen me?"

I was dumb and open-mouthed at this revelation. It was as wonderful news as any that wonderful day had proclaimed.

"Yes, I saw her here. I sat beside her at table. She didn't tell me she'd seen you, nor even that she had been to Montreal on her way home."

"Why, Dick, then that was surely very strange. There must have been some reason for such silence after what she said to me. I wonder what I did to change her?"

"Was it something you said, Doctor? What could you have said to set her against me? For pity's sake, Doctor, think!"

"I am thinking! — Was she cool with you, Dick?"

"Yes. At least she was not as responsive as I expected her to be. Oh, I had been longing to see her again. I had so long planned to make the most of my opportunity as soon as we met again. And when I proposed to call on her she practically told me not to do so. It was almost as if I had been false to her. But God knows that I have always been true to her. She has always been

uppermost in my thoughts. The memory of her, Doctor, has been an ideal to be striven for until realized. I've seen other attractive women besides Katherine, but they were nothing to her. Why, the thought of Katherine, when we were stranded on Station Island, checked me in a little bit of folly with one of these Daw girls. They're pretty enough, but—"

"There!" interrupted Doctor Bernard, "Now I know what happened. It was the letter. Had I watched her no doubt I would have detected something."

"The letter? What letter?"

"Your letter. The one you wrote from Station Island and threw out in a bottle. It came that Saturday. It was private, but we were talking about you and I put it into her hands as a help to my explanation. That was it—there was something in the letter about the Daw girls."

"And you told her about the treasure?"

"Yes, Dick. I was so charmed with her, and had a long friendly talk alone with her, and it all came out. I was perfectly certain it was what you would wish me to do. I'm so sorry, laddie. If through my fault a misunderstanding has sprung up I'll spend the rest of my days dispelling it, if I can."

The old man's kind eyes were almost tearful. I hastened to cheer him.

"Now, come, Doctor, don't blame yourself for an imaginary wrong. It was certainly my fault if I said too much about Nancy Daw in that letter."

"Nancy Daw was playing with you on the island—so I've heard. She had met Campion's son before and they had quarrelled, and when they were cast together on the same island she made love to you to fetch him back. She did rather too much as a matter of fact—even wearing an unknown boy's miniature around her neck. She punished young Campion too severely—he became jealous of you. That's what made him sick. He came to Montreal after the Daws and the two made friends again."

"Well! Well! Doctor, how did you learn all this?" I exclaimed.

"The other girl, Nora, told me. This is really what I brought you in here to tell you. These two girls are partly to be credited with persuading their father to come to this city, hoping, of course, that young Campion would be here. But he has not arrived yet. But, now, Richard, about Katherine. Take courage and don't imagine anything bad about her. Take courage from this: she is too fine a girl to change her heart towards you suddenly. Her mind, being a woman's mind, might be upset by what she learned of the man towards whom she had been drawn. But her heart, being a woman's heart, could not have changed so easily. If she loved you, or was beginning to love you, she will not have changed in that respect. Trust her unchanging heart."

"Thank you, Doctor."

"All right. Now let us go to the other folk."

Between talking over our adventure on Station Island, and hearing all the details of Mr. Daw's find of treasure, the remainder of the evening passed quickly. How I longed for Katherine's presence!

While making an early breakfast next morning the servant fetched me to the telephone. It was Mrs. Campion. She had received a message from Katherine which resulted in my remaining in Winnipeg, instead of taking the morning train to Vanista.

The telegram, which she read to me, was as follows:

"Father not been here Captain Mortimer mistaken where is he shall I come home this train.
—Katherine."

I knew I was not mistaken about Maurice Campion, but when Katherine was coming home I must remain in Winnipeg to meet her.

With Dr. Bernard's aid I attended to some money matters during the morning, and after lunching in the city called on Mrs. Campion as early as two o'clock. I intended to stay only a few minutes, to discuss the advisability of putting the disappearance of her husband into the hands of the police. She shrank from such a step, but felt that it ought to be taken. We had hardly entered upon the subject, however, when a telegram from Katherine, that should have arrived hours before, was delivered. It almost filled us with a panic, such was our disappointment—for

she had not left Vanista. All the message said was:

"*Believe Captain Mortimer Wandis Valley seeking him.—Katherine.*"

And I had deliberately missed the morning train! How maddening! Could I wait — or, rather, could the rescue of Katherine wait — until the night train carried me there next morning? No! Either an aeroplane or an automobile should take me.

A little hasty talk with Mrs. Campion, and then a definite suggestion was discussed. It gave her such pleasure that I took up the telephone instrument on the writing-table to get in touch with Mr. Johnston-Fuller, at his room in the offices of the Fort Garry Pulp Company. The reply to my enquiry was that Mr. Johnston-Fuller would speak to me in a few minutes. Setting down the receiver I waited, and looked around the room. Mrs. Campion had left it for the moment, I was alone. There were two doors, one by which I had entered from the small entrance hall, and one by which Mrs. Campion had gone out. Passing into the tiny hall I found that it also gave entrance to another room—a small study, lined with books and cabinets. With a courageous whim for finding out things I quietly entered this apartment and looked out of the window. It looked, as I expected, into the courtyard of the building, and was accessible from the fire-escape. That was the room where Campion had committed burglary. The telephone bell sounded and I hurried back.

"Mr. Fuller?"

"Yes, Dick?"

"Yes. Will you lend me two or three thousand dollars?"

"Will I lend you two or three thousand dollars? I haven't got two or three thousand dollars. What's the matter?"

"Well, you could get it, couldn't you? Its something very serious."

"Very serious? I should think it ought to be. What is it?"

"I can't tell you very well unless I see you."

"Then come and see me."

"There's no time to be lost."

"Hm-m-m. Well— h-m-m,— and I've no money to be lost either."

Which reminded me that there was a difference between being a man's guest and doing business with him.

"But, listen, Mr. Fuller," I went on, "you know I've got the money—"

"Then don't waste it, Dick. You've just got some money—keep it. Don't buy gold bricks."

"I don't want to buy anything—I only want to hire it," I replied.

"And what can you want to hire for that amount of money?"

"A train— a railway train," said I.

"A what!" he screamed.

"A train—a special train to take me to Vanista without delay. I can't wait for this evening's

train. I simply have to get there as quickly as possible."

"Then take a car, man, take a car,—get an automobile!"

"Yes," I replied ironically, "and be travelling in the dark to-night and making slow progress and having break-downs on the prairie. I've thought of that way and its not sure enough for me. I want a train. You get me a train, Mr. Fuller, will you? Tell them its a matter of life and death."

"Why, Dick, what's got into you? You can't order a private train as if it were a taxi. It would take hours, perhaps days, to get it. Besides, it would be slow. Nothing could be slower."

"Oh, it wouldn't be slow. It wouldn't have to make many stops. Instead of taking thirteen hours it would take seven or eight. Its nearly three now and if I start at four I ought to get there by midnight. If I wait for the 7.35 I can't get there before 8.17 in the morning."

"But, my boy, what's the great hurry?"

"Somebody's in danger and I have to go."

"Who is it? Tell me who it is?"

"Miss Dunbar," I said tremulously.

"Miss Dunbar; In danger? At Vanista? I don't understand you, Dick."

"Well, Mr. Fuller, will you try to get a train for me?"

"I'll telephone and see what they say. If I get it you may be none the better off. It isn't likely they will clear all traffic off the road just to let

you through. You may get side-tracked somewhere for hours."

A few more words and he rang off to do my bidding. Mrs. Campion had come into the room during my conversation with Mr. Johnston-Fuller. She was much pleased to overhear what I was saying. While we waited for developments I improved the opportunity by seeking information that might be of use to me.

"Mrs. Campion, I really think I ought to ask you quite a prying question. What would Mr. Campion have gone to Vanista for?"

She looked at me gravely.

"I have not the slightest idea. It has been puzzling me all the time. He must have gone through Winnipeg to get there, coming back from the east. He has not seen Katherine, his stepdaughter, since she came home. Why did he not call here as he passed through? I believe the Jeromes enticed him to the ranch by a ruse. Why, he even left Arthur behind."

In twenty minutes Mr. Johnston-Fuller telephoned.

"Well, Dick, I've done my best to get you a train. The Superintendent of this Division is trying to arrange it. When the Chief Dispatcher replies to him I will let you know. This is a queer performance. The time I'm losing over this business is costing me money this afternoon. And it will cost you something too."

"I don't care," I replied, "how much it costs you or me, Mr. Fuller. When I come back and

tell you all about it you won't mind a bit. And I'll pay you anything you lose."

"Bosh, my boy! I don't mind helping you if I can."

"Tell Dr. Bernard to wait here a couple of days till I come back, will you?"

"I'll tell him. What about the Daws? They came here purposely to see you. They are hoping to entertain you at their hotel."

"Oh, ask them to wait for me if they can. I want to see them again very much. They will be willing to wait, I think—I'm not the only person they want to see."

Twenty minutes more and I was informed that an engine was leaving the Roundhouse, with train crew, to couple with the Chief Engineer's private coach, and would be ready in a few minutes. Also the Superintendent wished to know if I wanted the car for the return journey, and when that would be! This was a matter I had not considered, but I gave an affirmative answer, and said I would require the car for perhaps two days.

"Mrs. Campion," I said, on departing, "do you suppose Mr. Campion has anything of great value with him down at Vanista? Anything, I mean, which would be a temptation to dishonest men if they found it in his possession?"

"No. I can't think that he would have anything of value with him that would be a temptation to the Jeromes. He once said something about minerals on the ranch. There was coal

down there. It is more likely that the Jeromes have found something valuable, and that Maurice has tried to assert his rights to it, and they have quarrelled over it."

"I don't think they've quarrelled at all. I think they're preoccupied with something," I replied.

Arriving at the station, before I stepped on board my train—the first great pleasure derived from the treasure of Station Island—I sent a telegram to the R.N.W.M.P. at Vanista.

"Coming special train midnight please meet me charge against certain men near Vanista kidnapping."

With a roar we started. I looked at my watch—It was five minutes past four. A little more than an hour previously I had first thought of a private train, and now I was in it!

It was a most attractive car, consisting of three compartments. One was the office and day room, where I sat in an easy chair with my feet on the seat of another. In the next were four sleeping berths, and a separate compartment accommodated a servant with cooking apparatus. This servant had thoughtfully provided me with newspapers and magazines. At six o'clock he brought in a most attractive little meal. At nine he appeared with another. Two or three times he looked in to bring cooling drinks or respond to my needs in other ways. At ten o'clock he put me to bed until Vanista should be near. But the comfort of the journey, the many attentions of my ebony-skinned attendant, and even the attempt

to sleep did not relieve the monotony and dreariness that lay on my soul like a pall. Surely, Katherine could not have gone out to Wandis River Valley alone? Alas, it was possible that she had done so, on horseback, and had fallen over that terrible ridge where her mother once had fallen! But, on reflection, another possibility—a more pleasant one to contemplate—took shape in my thoughts. If, as I had believed, Campion was in partnership with Wilfrid and Donald Jerome, and engaged in some nefarious practice—forging ten-dollar bills or something—and Katherine had arrived and discovered them red-handed at the game, they would have no alternative but to imprison her there while they tried to silence her. Her step-father would surely have enough respect and affection for her to protect her against the other two. So I might find her safe and sound after all.

One thought gives birth to another. So by devious ways does the mind conceive what the senses have not perceived. If Campion could and would protect Katherine he was not wholly a villain. Perhaps he was not a bad man at all. Perhaps! Perhaps, arriving at the ranch with the gold he had found on an island that "belonged to nobody" he had been robbed by the same men who had attacked me on my own visit. At that time he may have been bound, gagged, and secured, out of sight, in the barn. That might be why he had not appeared, and why I had not been allowed to wander around the premises when I was there!

I recalled how Donald Jerome insisted that I need not go out in the hot sun, though I had just ridden eighteen miles through it. When I referred to Maurice Campion the brothers were inflamed with anger, and they treated me as an enemy of theirs but a possible friend of Campion's. Had I told them that Campion was my enemy they might have treated me very differently. I could then have remained at the ranch and have had an interview with Campion. And now, for all I knew, Campion was a dead man, and Katherine Dunbar at the mercy of his murderers.

The train sped on. We stopped several times for different reasons on sidings and at junctions, and the waits were of considerable duration. But when on the move we simply flew over the tracks at a dangerous rate of speed.

Soon after twelve o'clock the attendant awoke me and I re-dressed, taking care to have plenty of tobacco and matches with me.

The special train on our railways attracts little attention from the public because it comes and goes unexpectedly, makes few stops, rests chiefly on a siding among freight cars, water-tanks and cabooses. My own special, of which, in spite of all my worrying distractions, I was very vain, paused but a moment at the passenger platform at Vanista, tossed me out of its select interior, and disappeared up the yard in a cloud of steam. There was one track between me and the boarded platform. A freight train, long and slow, was rumbling, bumping past on that track, and I stood

waiting for it to get out of my way. When its great length got out of my line of vision, I thought I would see a man in a scarlet coat, and with a broad yellow stripe down the side of his cavalry breeches, waiting for me. There might be no admiring crowd to see an important person descend from his special train, but there would be a policeman and, a little way off, a policeman's horse.

The end of the freight train passed with its tail lights and yawning brakeman. There was no R.N.W.M.P. There was nobody on the platform at all.

A light in the telegrapher's room showed me the night operator tap-tapping his instrument. Going into the waiting-room I spoke to him through the wicket. He had not seen the corporal that night. The barrack was a block down the street. Unless the corporal was out on duty he would be in bed. He would telephone if I wished. I did wish. A few minutes later, inside the small, neat building, beside a flag-staff, I was telling my errand to a Mounted Police corporal, who, hastily dressing in the adjoining room, was listening intently through the open doorway.

CHAPTER XIV

TREASURE ON THE TRAIL

"OH, you're the man who sent me a telegram aren't you?" said Corporal Benson, "Well, if I took notice of all the messages of that sort I'd be dead."

"Well, I can't give you orders, I know," I replied, "but I can call on you for help to find a lost lady and a lost husband."

"A lost 'lady' and her 'husband'?" he said, emerging to lace up his long riding boots by a better light.

"No," I said, "not quite that relationship. The man disappeared first, and probably was either murdered or gagged and trussed by the men he had dealing with, and his step-daughter probably went in search of him and also fell into their hands."

"H-m-m. Wait a second and I'll take down particulars. You ought to have given me more information when you telegraphed, and I might have had them by now."

"I don't think you could do what there is to be done without me," said I.

He became rigid at this, and glared his contempt of my speech. Now as I saw him in his

uniform, an athletic, fair-haired, handsome, Englishman—I knew it was quite a bold remark I had made.

He did not begin to boast of what great things he had done singlehanded, as I expected, but merely treated me to a fine piece of sarcasm in a very low tone.

"Say! Did you take this for a municipal police station?"

He made some entries in his book, with my aid. Having taken my name he asked several more questions in official phrases, and laid down his pen.

"You ought to have told me you were an officer when you came—when you were telephoning. —How do I know unless you tell me?" he said, quietly enough, "Have you got anything to show me, Sir, to prove you are Captain Mortimer?"

"I have nothing on my person. If you come over to the railway yards I can show you some papers and letters in my bag."

"We'll go there, then. You have a private car?"

"And then what are you prepared to do?"

"We'll start for Wandis River Valley right away."

"Then I'll go and get a horse from the livery stable."

He laughed long and loudly.

"They haven't got any horses over there," he said.

"I had a good little horse from there the other day," I asserted, enjoying his joke.

"Do you mean the one you rode backwards and all ways down the street?"

"Yes, did you see me?" I replied in surprise.

"I saw you," he said quietly.

"And you knew me again when I came in to-night?"

"Sure. I knew you, Sir."

"Well, where can I get a horse—a real horse?"

"I'll lend you a police horse. I have a spare mount—You'd better put on a pair of breeches and boots before we go."

He lent me a pair of khaki whipcord breeches and a pair of police riding boots and spurs. In his pouch he placed some clasps of .303 cartridges, took rifle and revolver, and went out to the stable, while I was changing into the gear he had lent me. I soon followed and assisted him.

"Are you coming over to my private car before we start, Corporal?"

"Yes, Sir, we'd better go there if you've anything to show me."

The horses showed their objection to being disturbed at one o'clock in the morning, but were too well-trained to be very troublesome.

At the railway station Corporal Benson surprised me by riding, unhesitatingly, across the tracks, as though they did not exist, but I followed close behind. We found the private coach on a side-track. A light gleamed faintly in the parlor.

"Why, that is strange," I remarked, "That nigger hasn't gone back to his berth."

"Who is it? Can you see?" asked the Corporal as we dismounted.

The light was from a lantern. A distorted shadow moved vaguely.

"Will the door be open?" asked my companion, "If it is let's rush it."

We rushed it in any case, and the door gave to the first push. Bounding in we saw the terrified face of the car attendant as he rose from the floor, where, by the light of a lantern, he was breaking the lock of my big club bag.

"Hands up!" cried Corporal Benson, and the wretch's hands went high.

"He hasn't hurt the lock," I said, examining it.

The Corporal returned his revolver to its holster and ran his hands quickly over the man's person.

"He hasn't got anything on him," he said.

"What are you going to do with him?" I asked.

"Take him outside and shoot him," said the policeman, and the poor darkie's eyes rolled with fright.

"Who is this man?" the Corporal asked him, pointing to me, "What's his name?"

"Mis- Mister Mor- Mortimer," he whined.

"That'll do, then," said the Corporal to me, "I don't want to see any papers."

"You're satisfied?" I said, "Very well."

He took the name and other details of information from the shivering man, and we left the car,

thrusting the fellow before us. Leading our horses across the tracks to the depot we took him into the agent's office. Corporal Benson telephoned to the Vanista police constable, and I wrote a report to be telegraphed to the authorities at Winnipeg with the request for another servant in the place of the thief.

"We're losing time," I said to Corporal Benson, and he cordially agreed, though I had no fault to find with his attention to duty.

We left the railway station, with our prisoner marching between our horses down the middle of the roadway, and continued so as far as the police station where we were met by the hastily summoned officer.

"Here, Chief, here's a playmate for you. But don't hurt him or he'll squeal," cried the corporal.

In a moment the railway car attendant was handed over by the R.N.W.M.P. to the village police of Vanista.

"Now, Cronyn's is the only livery stable in this place where saddle-horses are for hire. We can wake Cronyn up and find out if Miss Dunbar took a horse from him."

This was done accordingly. We learned all we needed to learn from the livery stable proprietor, although a newly awakened man is not usually very lucid over the telephone. Miss Dunbar, eighteen hours before—that was, at eight in the morning—had ridden off on the little broncho, and he had no idea of her destination but expected it was Campion's ranch.

"She has failed to find me here on arrival, and has taken for granted that I was at the ranch," said I, "We must go there."

"That's the place to look for her," said the Corporal.

We mounted, and set off. Our horses were magnificent beasts, and might have been brothers for the like qualities they showed, and besides, were highly trained for their purpose. We covered the ground at a furious speed as we passed along the lighted street, but getting out on to the prairie it was necessary to be cautious. It was between two and three o'clock in the morning, the darkness was intense, and our errand—an expedition against hardened rascals—no easy matter.

For my part, I was impelled forward by love of a girl who needed me and believed in me. Whatever the cost of rescuing her I was prepared to pay it. Of Campion I thought but little. My heart towards him had changed. After all, I thought, he may not have stolen anything, but may be a victim of malice. Corporal Benson, acting only from a sense of duty, was inclined, for the sake of prudence, to take the most serious view of the case. I had told him that my relationship to Maurice Campion and to his step-daughter Katherine Dunbar, was only that of an acquaintance, and so he felt quite free to speak frankly of the possibilities. Not being able, on account of the darkness, to make very swift progress, we were able, with many interruptions, to exchange

opinions and information. Corporal Benson came closer to me after a mile or two and passed a remark.

"There's only one way down into the Jeromes' place. It's a bad road. Bad in the day-time, worse now. But there'll be a little light by the time we get to the ranch."

I agreed. Later he spoke again.

"There's no doubt they'll expect to be attacked if they're still at the ranch. We'd better go up cautiously. Tough pair, those Jeromes." I agreed again. Then it was my turn.

"Whatever we do if it comes to a fight we must not hurt the girl," I said, "and yet we must save her whatever it costs us."

"There'll be a fight, Sir," was the laconic reply.

We approached the edge of the great ravine as the pale yellow light of dawn filled the cloudless sky, and we began the sudden descent in single file, Corporal Benson leading because he was armed. We moved necessarily more slowly than ever, for not only was there great danger of falling off the narrow path, but we also feared an ambush in the trees ahead. The steepest part of the road was covered without accident but as soon as we entered the bush where, for a quarter of a mile the deep shade made it as dark as night, our difficulties increased. There the first mishap occurred and might have been fatal.

The gait of a horse descending an uneven slope in a direct line is often most disconcerting to the rider. Under such circumstances no animal is so

unreliable. He does not know how to pick his steps for his own good, although I have heard men attribute ridiculous exploits to their own horses. The horse is very intelligent, perhaps the most intelligent of all animals, but his intelligence is certainly not in his feet. Corporal Benson and I were riding two of the best members of the species—not mere race-horses, nor mere trotters—highly trained and thoroughly disciplined, and in spite of everything we nearly came to grief. It was at a particularly bad spot. The big horses beneath us were shuffling and pawing almost on their haunches. A strand of barbed wire fastened a foot above the ground brought the Corporal's horse down with a crash. At the same moment the Corporal leapt from the saddle and cried a warning to me. The horse got his fore feet over the wire and his hind legs caught under it. Struggling to rise he broke the wire with a loud twang.

After that we agreed to walk and lead the horses. But when we got into the narrow gorge between the low cliffs we returned to the saddle, and before long came to another obstacle like the first. The horses were induced to step over it, and then we held a council of war.

"They don't want any visitors, do they?" said Corporal Benson.

"They appear to expect visitors all the same," I replied.

"I think one of us had better go on and scout," said the Corporal.

"Very well, let me do it—I know the country," I said.

"So do I. But if you go you can do it as well as I can. If these cliffs weren't in the way we could get round on a flank."

"Yes, I wonder if I could climb those cliffs," I said, looking up at both sides.

Deciding to attempt it I began at once on the south cliff, taking with me the rifle, slung to my shoulder, and leaving Corporal Benson with the horses. After some scrambling I got to the top. The growth of poplar along the edge provided me with cover and passing through them I soon came to the place where the trail left the gorge, and crossed the grassy ranges to the ranch. The entrance to the gorge from that end was just beneath me as I lay flat on the edge. The house, barn, buildings and corral were all in view.

For a few minutes I lay watching the scene in the ever brightening morning light. The herd that formerly fed in that great meadow were not in sight, except a single cow. Some fowls were picking about the barn. Otherwise there was no sign of life in the immediate vicinity of the ranch. Below me, in the very entrance of the gorge, several trees had been cut down so as to completely block the opening. There was an hour's work before us to clear the road. I lay watching the ranch and wondering if it held Katherine a prisoner. As my eyes roamed over the whole vista of grass land, river, and bush, I became conscious of a movement far to the south. The irregularities

of the landscape hid whatever it was from view, and I supposed it might have been a coyote, a fox, a badger—anything. Then I went back.

"Nobody in sight—not a soul—hardly a sign of life at all, Corporal," I said on reaching him again, "But there's proof of great activity having recently taken place further down the road."

"Is there?" said he, as we sprang to our seats, "What is it?"

"A barricade," I replied, and led the way, the rifle still slung to my back.

When we reached it, a number of small trees sawn and fallen across the road, it proved to be quite a problem to overcome. We could easily have climbed over it on foot, but there was no getting the horses to do that sort of thing until it was at least partially cleared away. So we began to deal with it by hand, lifting and dragging the uppermost trunks to get them free from the pile. After working, not very successfully, for a while, we paused, breathing heavily.

"Let's burn it!" said Corporal Benson.

So we set fire to it. Resinous wood and evergreens, always inflammable, are still easier to burn after a summer drought. The barricade became a crackling, singing furnace in a few minutes. We backed to some distance both for our own comfort and for the good of the horses. In half an hour by the use of long sticks we were clearing a way through the glowing embers. Then we mounted and put the horses to it. Each horse, on passing the fire, plunged forward as though in

a charge, and so, contrary to the rules of caution, we were both carried out and further across the plain than we wished.

"We're exposed now!" shouted Corporal Benson, checking his horse.

We came to a halt a few hundred yards from the house and sat gazing upon it.

"They could see that fire and now they can see us," I remarked, "so they know we're here."

"Why don't they shoot, if they're going to?"

"Perhaps they're not going to."

"Come on then, if they want a closer shot," and the policeman started on again.

"Perhaps they'll run for it out the other way," I suggested.

"All right, then," he replied, "You stay here with that rifle, Sir, and cover them if they do. I'll ride into the yard."

He darted off at the gallop and I cocked the rifle and kept my eyes open. The result was nil. While my companion tore round the house and barn, jumping the fences in places and yelling, he failed to draw fire, and I was unable to see any difference in the peaceful scene except the fluttering hens and the alarmed cow. When Corporal Benson signalled I joined him.

"Let's raid the buildings," he suggested.

"If you say so," I said, "but look out for a trap when we get inside."

We exchanged arms before entering the house, and then, with revolver and rifle at the ready, tried the front door. The Corporal opened it,

and released a Great Dane. The brute had never made a sound, and now, with dripping jaws and showing horrible fangs, sprang at my companion's throat. I shot him in mid-air as Corporal Benson dodged him. He dropped clear of the verandah steps, and rolled over and over in the dust, blood spurting from his flank.

"Anybody inside come out" yelled Corporal Benson, and on receiving no answer, added, "Wilfrid Jerome! Donald Jerome!" But there was no response. Cautiously we picked our way in. The first room, dirty and neglected, seemed to be just the same as on my previous visit.

"Anybody at home!" I yelled, and kicked open the other doors and, in short, searched the whole house, finding no living occupant. The room upstairs, where, after a blow on the head, I had been imprisoned, was a testimony to the truth of my story, and I pointed out the details of proof to the policeman. The blood-stain on the floor remained.

"Well, nobody here in this house," said he, "I guess we'd better go over to the other shanties and see if there's anybody at home over there. Perhaps they have chores to attend to, Captain Mortimer."

So we went all through the stables and stalls, and as in the house, found no living soul—or dead body. Corporal Benson was outside, ahead of me, and I turned aside to look into a bin a second time.

"Corporal," I called, "look here! What is straw doing in a feed-bin?"

"Don't know," he said as he bent to look in, "Looks as if it had been somebody's bunk."

And certainly it had been lain on, either by man or beast.

"In my opinion," I said, "this is where Mr. Campion has been kept a prisoner."

"Yes, that may be," said the Corporal, "And where has the girl been kept a prisoner? And where are these two prisoners now?"

"Come back to the house will you," I said, and we went back.

"It looks as if we'll have to hunt the province over to find them."

We passed the dog I had shot, now dead, a great brute, lying on his side.

"That was a mistake," said Corporal Benson.

"He would have been useful?"

"Yes."

"Yes. I suppose so. We should have made friends with him and then we could have tracked the Jeromes. I couldn't help it though."

"It was a fine shot, Sir. He would have had his teeth in me."

I wanted to take another look around the house, and went a second time into the half-decent parlor where I had waited unwillingly on my first visit to the ranch.

Looking in this time I began to note everything in the room, and almost immediately I noticed that the photograph of Maurice Campion was now

not hanging on the wall, but lying on the sofa, face upwards. Who removed it, and why?

As I took it up a paper fluttered away and I grabbed it expectantly. It was pencilled writing by Katherine! With what fevered haste did I read it, and read it again!

July —th. I, Katherine Dunbar, of Winnipeg, am held here by the Jeromes. I came here alone, expecting to find friends but they refuse to let me go. When I asked for my father, Mr. Campion, they said he had gone away with Captain Mortimer, but I cannot believe it. I thought I would meet Captain Mortimer on the way or here on arrival, but was disappointed. All day I have been in this room and night is now coming on. Two or three times I have tried to escape. As I fear that the Jeromes are planning something terrible I write this, which I hope to conceal, until it is found by friends.

With trembling hands I handed the paper to Corporal Benson.

"Good God! What have they done with her?" he exclaimed — "You think this is genuine, do you?"

"Yes—yes," I groaned, "It is her writing."

She seems to have known more than she tells," he remarked.

I pocketed the pathetic message with a great fear in my heart—and it must also have been in my face, for Corporal Benson clapped his hand on my shoulder.

"We'll find him, Sir—We're having nothing but good luck. We've overcome every obstacle so far, haven't we? Let's just look for tracks leading out of this place. Seems to me it's deserted."

That fact was, of course, already impressed on my mind. The question remained: In what direction had they gone? Up the valley or down the valley? After a long period of dry weather there was little chance of tracking horseman or pedestrian. After a cursory examination of the ground in two or three directions, we fell to discussing the likeliest route to be chosen by kidnappers, murderers, or thieves evading the long arm of the law. They might have gone northward along the valley, westward over the prairie if they could get up the west bank, or southward into North Dakota. The last was on all considerations the most probable objective of the Jerome brothers, if they had committed any serious offence against the law. How they had disposed of their victims we could not imagine—unless they had taken them with them. It seemed hardly likely that any fugitive from justice would encumber their progress by forcing unwilling persons to accompany them. There could be only one reason for such procedure on the part of the Jeromes—to my mind. It would be because, having deprived Maurice Campion of a quantity of gold dust, they dare not leave him behind to raise a hue and cry after them. And Katherine Dunbar, for a similar reason—and perhaps for a worse one—had shared his fate.

CHAPTER XV.

BESIEGING THE BANDITS

"THERE'S nothing to be gained by remaining here a minute longer. Let's be off!" I cried, and after watering the horses at the creek we started without further delay. Taking a half-distinguishable trail that led fairly down the middle of the valley, but which we soon lost, we found ourselves at the brink of the river again, for it wound so unexpectedly from side to side it could not long be avoided. We rode through it, the horses sinking deeply in the mud.

"That was a bad place," said Corporal Benson. "We might get into quick-sand doing like that. Should have looked for a ford."

We raced across a flat and then encountered the river again, encircling a large peninsula. Following its course a little distance we came to a ford and were about to enter it when the Corporal halted deliberately, with an exclamation.

"What is it?" I asked as I joined him.

"Tracks!"

In the soft earth at the water's edge were the tracks of several horses and of a waggon. We dismounted and examined them carefully, trying to read their story. That they were new was

shown by the fact that tiny blades of green grass were caught in the impressions. A team drawing a waggon together with several other horses appeared to have passed. On the farther shore the mud had received the same churning.

"Well, so far as we can tell, they've taken a waggon with them and some led horses," said the Corporal.

"But taking a waggon doesn't look like running away, does it?" I replied. "What do you make of it?"

My companion could not explain it, and though we soon lost all trace of the tracks we had at least learnt the direction taken. No doubt if we stuck to it and pushed forward we would do right. The right direction having been determined only speed was necessary to bring us up with our quarry. And that they were impeded by a vehicle on wheels, a waggon, encouraged us greatly.

The great ravine of the diminutive stream of the Wandis River changed somewhat in character as we proceeded. The irregularities of the land surface became more marked, and the growths of spruce, poplar, willow and other trees were mixed with underbrush of hazel. The prairie openings were smaller, and the mounds were replaced by outcroppings of rock. The west bank of the valley definitely resolved itself into a chalk cliff, a white wall that blazed in the sun. The opposite bank was a steep slope covered with grass, brown and green. Both sides effectually walled in the ravine,

so that there was no chance of the Jeromes having left it for the prairie above.

"The country gets worse the further you go, doesn't it, Sir?" remarked Corporal Benson, alluding to the value of the land.

"Yes," I replied, "not much good for anything, here."

"Unless something could be mined."

"Such as what, Corporal?"

"Well—coal."

"Ah!"

"Or gold."

"Hm!"

"Don't you think there might be such things, Sir?"

"I don't know, Corporal."

This conversation was about all that passed between us for a mile or two. At every turn, over the top of every rise, at every new glimpse of the distance we looked forward expectantly. That we could not sight the fugitives was not so great a worry as the danger of letting them slip into United States territory. Two or three times we found their tracks and were in no doubt about their existence a short distance ahead. And then we saw them.

A waggon, hauled by a team, was escorted by two mounted horses, the riders being men. They were half a mile ahead and we got a fair view of them, but only for a second, as they were passing out of sight in a clump of trees. We were on a rising ground at the time, and we flew down the

intervening slope at a truly break-neck speed, for there were holes and boulders everywhere and we made no attempt to avoid them.

"They didn't see us!" cried the Corporal. "Let us get as close as we can."

"Only the two Jeromes!" I replied. "Where are the two others?"

"Perhaps they were in the waggon," he shouted, and I had to be content with that supposition.

Getting mixed up with several sloughs held us awhile, and so we did not see the Jeromes again for an hour or two. Our progress was very slow and difficult—what must theirs have been with a waggon? The character of the country became more and more broken and varied. We were as much retarded by swamps as by rocks and trees. The Jeromes may or may not have been aware of our presence a quarter of a mile behind them—we could not tell. Only we were sure of catching them, once we came to an open flat. As the Corporal remarked, we seemed to be continually turning corners, and so winding was the valley, that the Jeromes were always out of sight just round the next corner. To have shouted, or to have fired a shot, in order to attract their attention, would probably have set them on their guard and drawn fire. We wanted to get as close as possible before we took any such action, or it might defeat its own purpose by inducing retaliation.

This need of caution was carefully observed, and each time we entered upon a fresh view or

turned a corner or skirted a wood we took the precaution of looking before us so that we should not come upon the Jeromes unexpectedly. When you are hunting a bear it is well to know exactly where the bear is.

Speaking of bears: we encountered one of those furry gentlemen. The sight of him, a well-fed person, eating wild fruit in a patch of blackberries and blueberries, was a surprise. All game had hitherto been driven from before us by those who preceded us along the valley. But the valley was very wide just there, and the presence of bruin undisturbed at his dinner, showed that the Jeromes had not passed through that blueberry patch. Possibly, we said, they were on our left hand, where undulating grass-land fell towards the meandering Wandis. Hardly had this been observed by one of us, and acquiesced in by the other, than I heard voices.

"Let's see what they are doing," I suggested.

Without another word we instantly dismounted, and, throwing reins over heads, left our horses with their clinking bits, while we two crawled through the grass and in the direction indicated by voices. We could not go so close as to be able to see what was going on, but we easily got within earshot. A boulder, twenty feet high, and as wide, provided us both with good cover.

"Put it in his mouth again, Donald."

It was Wilfrid Jerome speaking.

A smothered shout, in Campion's voice, was electrifying. A sense of duty would have com-

pelled us to rush to his aid, but, for my part, a secondary feeling of curiosity overruled the impulse, and I held the Corporal with me. If Maurice Campion was the occupant of the waggon its presence was accounted for. He was a prisoner, and his being alive encouraged the hope that Katherine Dunbar was neither murdered nor a prisoner, but was safe and free.

The murmur of deep masculine voices continued, and the speakers seemed to be engaged in a task the nature of which it was impossible to guess as we lay in the long marsh grass behind a wall of granite. The temptation to peep round the corner was irresistible.

"I'm going to look, Corporal," I said, and my companion nodded approvingly.

I had not been moose-hunting as a boy without learning to glide like a rattler, and with even less noise than that deadly reptile. The chances were that in that very crevice of rock, nestling among the feathery grasses which I displaced so gently as I crawled—a rattle-snake, or a puffing-adder, was sleeping. If there had been one of those beautiful and dangerous creatures I might have had cause to repent bitterly for disturbing it. But the ground proved to be too damp for their slumbrous and heat-loving habits, for the spot was close to the creek. I crawled forward, therefore, until my head extended beyond the farthest angle of the rock and I could see the party whose voices we had heard.

Thirty feet away stood a light waggon, with

shallow sides, to which were hitched three fine black horses. Two saddle horses as beautiful and valuable as the others were tied to the wheels. Mr. Campion—at least, I guessed that the bound recumbent figure was he—was on the ground a few feet in front of the three-horse team. Had the team moved forward he would certainly have been trampled upon, but perhaps it was his very presence there under the noses of the horses that restrained them from inflicting such an injury.

These things I could understand, they provided no mystery—the horses, the wagon and the prisoner. But what on earth were the Jeromes doing? Through the trellis wheels and horses' legs, which greatly obstructed my view, I could see them busily digging in the wet sand of the bank of the Wandis River. But what for?

Wilfrid Jerome was using a spade and Donald was scooping with his bare hands. After a few minutes Wilfrid gave the spade to his brother and approached Campion, wiping his dripping face. Looking down upon the prostrate captive he suddenly laughed, spat at him, and delivered a ferocious kick. The helpless man answered with never a groan—that I could hear.

"See here, Maurice, it's a big hole we've made there already. Donald says I'd better make a corpse of you and bury you here. What do you think of that for an idea?"

Another cowardly kick.

"I'm going to dig a bit deeper—d'ye hear, Maurice? And then if we don't soon come to

something—you're going to be put to sleep—and put to bed—right here in your own cemetery. Don't think we want you chasing us all over North America! And as for the girl, we know what to do with her. There's a way to fix her so that she'll never want to see you nor me again. D'ye understand?"

I nearly suffocated with impatience to be at this beast's throat, to demand the whereabouts of Katherine Dunbar; and doubtless I would have sprung up had not a cry from Donald drawn the attention both of Wilfrid and myself to him. Donald had found something.

With what amazement then did I see the Jerome brothers lifting several small boxes out of the ground and carrying them to the waggon with manifestations of great glee. Was it my long-sought treasure?

They were loading the great bulk of Maurice Campion on to the waggon when I felt Corporal Benson tugging at my heel. Slipping back in obedience to his signal I quickly told him what I had seen.

"And where's the girl?" he asked.

"She must be at the house," I replied, "and these fellows are now going back there."

"Do you think they are?"

"Yes, of course. What should we do—follow them all the way back or arrest them now?"

"Well, if you arrest them now they may refuse to tell you where the girl is, Sir."

"True," I replied. "Perhaps we had better wait. It's a shame not to rescue Mr. Campion, though. He's tied up and gagged. I wonder if they've hurt him much."

"Listen!" hissed the Corporal, "They're off!"

It was too true. Already they were well away, moving as though they knew we were on their heels. We ran for our horses, obediently waiting in the nearest clump of spruce, and leapt into the saddle.

"They're not going back, Sir!" said the policeman. "They're going further on!"

"Then let us catch them and arrest them!" I replied.

We spurred our horses to the race and dashed out into the open, yelling to the bandits we were pursuing.

"They'll be across the border, Sir!" shouted the Corporal to me, and that danger, for we could not be many miles from the State of Montana, enraged me as I thought of it.

"Corporal!" I cried, with a sudden impulse, "I never told you about the gold. That's gold they've got in the waggon!"

There was no reason why I should not tell the secret of this kidnapping. It would have to come out, and I announced it when I did because I suddenly felt that the information would urge Corporal Benson to try his utmost to capture the thieves. He half stopped his horse, however, as though it would deter him rather than impel him forward. I could see that his face was stern as he

bent low on the withers. He had seen something I had missed.

"Bend down!" he cried, warningly.

A shot! A bullet sang past us.

The desperate villians, at our exposure and shouting, had shown battle immediately, and one —I don't know which—turning, took quick aim at us from a hundred and fifty yards' distance and gave us the benefit of his fire. We might have responded. We could have halted and taking steady aim have brought the horses down, after which it would have been easy to apprehend the riders. But to do so would have required good shooting, and it would have been necessary to have brought down all four horses. To do that might have caused a great injury to Maurice Campion, and the thought must have been in both our minds. So instead of returning the fire we galloped forward, looking for a better opportunity. But it did not come. The odds of fortune were in favour of the Jerome brothers.

Of course we expected an accident to happen to the waggon, careering wildly across the flat. They were lashing their horses cruelly and seemed determined to escape, and what greatly encouraged them in the attempt was the fact that they were on a level meadow such as we had not crossed for several miles. And, besides that, another feature of this part of the valley must be noted. A cliff, like that on the west side, now rose on the east side. Thus we were shut in on both sides of the ravine by high white walls of chalk. These cliffs

were uniformly steep but exceedingly irregular. The Jeromes disappeared, to our surprise, round the corner of a great buttress of the cliff and we lost them for the time. We ourselves, following in great haste, made the unpardonable mistake of entering the gully of a small creek cutting the cliff off at right angles. There were many such, and also many deep recesses that had formerly been eddying back-waters of the river in the days of its glory. It was possible for the traveller to miss the main passage of the river valley and to enter one of these high walled enclosures, only to find out his mistake. We ourselves almost made that error a couple of times, losing ground in so doing and in retracing our steps. And, finally, only a mile or two from the United States border, the Jeromes, to our great joy, did the same thing in another such pocket.

It was when they saw us the second time. Quite unexpectedly as we turned a corner we faced a smooth grass flat close to the cliff on the west side. A hundred yards ahead were the two Jeromes riding on either side of the waggon drawn by the three horses, two at the tongue and one ahead. As we galloped forward yelling, they also fairly flew—straight across the meadow—into the opening of a spacious recess. It was one of the most deceiving of its kind, so wide at the entrance that anyone taking it might believe he was keeping to the main ravine, and it narrowed to about a chain's width, then widening into a great circular space from which there was no

other passage. Into this natural trap our bold bandits dashed at a dangerous speed. At such a reckless rate there was the danger to us as to them of coming to grief in a hole or stumbling over the large loose stones that covered the ground in patches, and no doubt the Jeromes hoped some such misfortune would delay us while they would have the good luck to escape it. They could never have supposed that, encumbered as they were with a laden waggon, it would be possible to out-distance any well-mounted pursuers. As for Corporal Benson and myself I think we guessed that they were going into an impassable defile before they realized it. They had reached the narrowest part of it when Wilfrid Jerome fell back from the little cavalcade unslinging his rifle as he did so. But it was a move that required time. I had the advantage of him, and I took it. For before he had turned round far enough to level his weapon upon us I shot his horse beneath him. The great beast plunged uncontrollably, Wilfrid Jerome dropped his rifle, and the wounded horse with it helpless rider passed from our sight in a moment.

"Halt!" I shouted, flinging myself backwards with my weight on the horse's mouth to stop him. To go farther then just would have been foolish, since we were sure the Jeromes were caught in a trap. To have followed them blindly might easily have been disastrous, for they were armed, and we might be ambushed before ever we got another chance to fire on them.

"They can't get out of there, Captain Mortimer!"

"No, I think not," said I. "Come out of here, it's not a safe place."

We retired some distance, and discussed the situation.

"They made a mistake going in there," said the Corporal.

"Unless they can get out on the prairie side," I replied.

"I don't believe it, Sir. And even if they can they can't get away with anything, not even their horses."

"That's true. I wonder if there's any way of finding out. If I could get up on the prairie I would see what they are doing."

"Well, now, look there," said the Corporal pointing upwards. "There's a slope all the way up. I believe you could get up there, don't you?"

He drew my attention to an abutment of the cliff which, at an angle of 60 or 70 degrees protraction, reached from where we sat on our horses to the tableland of the prairie three hundred feet above us.

After surveying the steep slope for a few minutes I was encouraged to begin the ascent. Corporal Benson was to keep watch on what we believed was the only exit to the gully. With the revolver in my belt, I started the climb.

"This is easier than landing on Station Island," I thought, as, digging my toes in the crumbling chalk, I made excellent progress. But before I

got to the top I had changed my opinion. There were places where I slipped downwards with a sickening feeling that I would fall to the bottom. Such a fearful fate being avoided I clambered at length on to the breeze-swept level and breathed freely. Then a swift survey of the prairie convinced he that so far the Jeromes had not escaped. I advanced to the edge of the precipice to look down on them.

There they were! I lay flat and hung over. The cliffs around this prison yard certainly afforded no invitation to be scaled, and I am sure the prisoners had not attempted to climb them. The waggon and horses were in the very middle of the yard—for that is the best description of the floor of that deep formation—and I scrutinized the group from my high vantage point. At first I saw only four horses instead of five, and then I noticed, at a distance, one of the saddle-horses down on his side, in a dying condition. Looking for the Jeromes I concentrated my attention on the waggon. What emotions of horror, rage, and love convulsed my breast as I gazed down into that rough vehicle and noted its precious contents! For it was laden, not only with the bound living body of Maurice Campion, not only, in addition to him, with white wooden boxes of gold dust, but also side by side with the man and the gold, a more precious treasure was laid. Katherine had not escaped after all! In the hands of a pair of brutal men she had suffered the indignity and pain of that day's wild journey.

CHAPTER XVI

RESCUE AND RECONCILIATION

WITH a great effort I subordinated the demands of love to the commands of duty. For love would have cried out and revealed itself, but duty called for other action. What was to be gained by shouting from a distance to a powerless captive? What would be the result of proclaiming my presence on the crest of the cliff? Nothing was to be gained, and a few shots at my head would be the result. If the Jeromes learnt of my presence above them they would know for certain that only one of their enemies was at the mouth of the gully, and a desperate sally to attack my companion might have taken place immediately. But where were the Jeromes?

Moving around the rim of the great pit, for that is what it looked like from above, I obtained a better and more comprehensive view of the floor below. It was a barren hole, apparently—empty except for buffalo bones, weather-worn boulders of limestone, and the rotted debris of a few fallen trees. From where a more direct view of the entrance could be obtained I could see the Jeromes. They lay prostrate under a projecting

rock, covering the passage with their guns, and it was plainly their intention to shoot and kill anyone who forced that passage. The weapon I carried was equal to what they used, except that theirs were two and mine was one. Should I pick them off like a sniper while I had the chance? No. The instinct for fair play restrained me from shooting a man in the back, and, besides, it was too long a range. Though I may be a marksman with a rifle I cannot claim to be an expert with a revolver. Another course must be followed, and I crawled off to retrace my steps.

"To retrace my steps" was hardly the phrase to describe slipping down the face of that awful cliff, but in order to descend it was necessary to go down exactly where I went up; no other place was possible. Even there it was so dangerous that good luck had to be added to the most patient care, or a malign Fate, crumbling the climber's foothold and numbing his fingers, would toss him mercilessly to the bottom, and sudden death. When going up I was able to look forward continually to the next most inviting ledge for assistance both to my hands and to my feet. But going down I was compelled to go blindly, feet first, eyes last—never knowing if the next moment, I would slip, roll, and spin into eternity. I got all the way down, however, and picked my way through the bottom, knocking the chalk out of my clothes.

"That was great, Sir!" said Corporal Benson, "What did you see? They're still in there, aren't they?"

"Yes, they are all in there safe enough, and there's no way out except this way. Miss Dunbar is there too."

"Ah! I thought she must be in that waggon because the boxes were arranged in the middle and something held them from falling over to either side."

Corporal Benson, as I gave him a complete report of all that I had seen, and as he heard how I refrained from shooting at the Jeromes, expressed the opinion that I had missed a good chance, and that one of us had better go up again. He agreed with me, however, that it is not perfectly desirable to shoot a man in the back, whatever may be the man's intention towards oneself. Then he regretted that I had not put a few shots into the horses to disable them. But he fully appreciated my motives in not firing at all when I explained that those we hoped to save were too close for such an attempt, and that had I made known my presence up there to the Jeromes they might have dashed out to fight him, two to one.

"Well, what about this gold? Is it really gold, Sir?"

What legal difficulties was I laying up for myself by informing a police officer that the precious yellow metal—to win which men often sacrifice home, health and honour—was what had caused the adbuction of a Government servant and of his beautiful daughter, and had brought me half way across the continent to claim as my own! I hesitated to discuss it.

"Don't you think, Corporal, that we are rather foolish to lie here among the snakes? The only advantage is that we are under cover. But what if the Jeromes decided to run for it?"

"I'll get a good shot at them if they do that," said the Corporal.

"Well, if you miss them, and they get away, you and I will be fifty yards from our own horses, and we'll run to get them and while we're about it they'll have time to bring down both of our horses and get away."

He chuckled as though I were joking.

"If I couldn't kill all five of their horses as they came out—one after another—I don't care how fast—I ought to be dismissed from the service with ignominy."

As the holder of several cups and tropies I could not help laughing at this expression of complete self-confidence. My laugh put him on his mettle. He turned a serious face to me.

"You don't remember me, Captain Mortimer? You never heard of me?"

"As a shot? Are you a famous shot? Why, there was a King's prizeman called Benson.—Was it you?"

He nodded modestly.

"You'll have to take my word for it—my badge is not on this tunic. The tailor made a mistake last week and I didn't get the right uniform."

"Well, Corporal, I'm awfully glad to meet—"

Bang!

It was Corporal Benson who had fired when he saw, with a never resting eye, the villainous black-bearded face of Donald Jerome emerging from a place of concealment to scan the entrance to his self-chosen prison. I just saw Donald Jerome draw back unhurt.

"Yes. I'm Benson. But it's dreadful to have a reputation for anything—it's so hard to live up to."

"Hm! You're pretty cool," I replied. "That was Donald Jerome having a look out to see how the land lay. You were quick—did you see him coming?"

"I had my eye on that spot. I thought he would appear just there."

"But you didn't hit him"—I twitted him.

"Huh! Not likely. We want to get him alive don't we?"

"If he comes again what will you do?"

"He won't come out again, Sir—not like that. But I'll tell you what he will do. He'll ride out with his brother. Don't you think so?"

"I don't know," I replied.

"Well, don't you think we'd better get back to the saddle now, ready to chase them if they do?"

"Very well. But will they not be much more likely to wait till dark?"

We recovered our horses behind a screen of low brush, over and through which it was easy to keep an eye on the Jeromes' one way to freedom.

"Well, now, will they?" asked the Corporal, resuming the conversation.

"Perhaps not. If they wait until dark, which means nearly six hours before it will be dark enough—they will have as many difficulties in the darkness as we shall and I'm sure they know that."

"Yes, you're right, Sir. And besides that, does it occur to you that we have time to send for help between now and ten o'clock to-night—one of us could go and bring ten men back?"

"If that possibility occurs to the Jeromes," said I, "they will not wait for darkness."

Nor did they. They had evidently decided that if they could save themselves from capture they had better abandon both their victims and the gold. We had not to wait long for their bold attempt to escape. The sudden thunder of their horses in the echoing passage silenced our discussion and gave us an answer to our speculations.

"Here they come!"

I was glad to see them. The suspense of waiting, short though it was, was telling on me with terrible anguish. Though I had tried all day to be calm outwardly and to be wise inwardly, the seven devils of impatience gibbered around me, taunting me almost to some fanatic action in an endeavour to hold in my arms, though it were only to die, the one who was more than all the world to me.

And now, the pain of that suspense was over. The climax of the adventure was at hand, for the struggle of so many miles over a toilsome road was as nothing compared with the violence

of the impending conflict. And the change was exhilarating.

Wilfrid Jerome came out first, and the horse on which he tried to escape was shot through the neck by the vigilant policeman. The effect was, in the first place, extraordinary to behold. The stricken beast instantly lost the use of his legs, and the impetus of his charge carried his hind quarters skywards, so that he spun over two circles almost in mid-air, breaking his back as he came to earth. In the second place, his bold rider, with the luck of all rogues, had a miraculous escape. Wilfrid Jerome was thrown many feet clear of the dangerous body and hoofs of the unfortunate horse, and the spot where he fell was a bed of dust that could not do more than bruise him. It raised a cloud so dense that Donald Jerome, following, got past us unseen, a hundred feet away.

We pursued Donald, and a fearful race began. Driving in the spurs I tore after the escaping robber with a recklessness born of both love and hate. His start was greatly in his favour, for my horse was not into his stride when Donald seemed to be a mile away. Four times he fired back random shots, and the fourth—a sheer accident—took effect in my own brave animal's breast. He stumbled and staggered helplessly, and at that instant Corporal Benson, yelling something about "the other man," dashed past me. So, abandoning my wounded mount, I ran back the quarter mile to the gully entrance, seeking Wilfrid

Jerome. Not seeing him I turned without a pause up the narrowing passage to the inner space. And I burst in upon him there—at the wagon—about to carry off a box of the gold! He heard me coming, and dropped the box, jumped, placing the waggon between us.

"Stop!" he yelled, a murderous knife in his hand. "Stop! or I'll kill her! Stop!" and he raised the glittering steel over the defenceless form of Katherine.

I paused, almost breathless with running, and almost helpless in face of such a danger. I had lost my revolver!

"Let me go or I'll stab her!"

"You coward!" I cried. My eyes fell to a writhing mass beneath the wheels—Maurice Campion, fallen out, struggling to free himself from his bonds. He was nearly free.

"Let me go or I'll stab her!"

"All right," said I, getting my wind splendidly, "You can go."

He obeyed me instantly, and as he ran I added:

"I'll count five! One—two—three—four—five!" and darted after him.

The fool refused to take his chance but turned on me with his knife, having lost his gun, and he struck at me viciously, slitting a finger of the left hand, but I closed with him on the instant. He continued to stab but could not reach me for I got my arms under his arms and clasped my hands over his throat, and so mastered him, to his great surprise. But not until I had downed him and

pounded his skull on the stones did he give in. Then, between concussion and throttling, he had had enough of it, and intimated that satisfaction by groaning like a wild beast. I only relaxed my hold very slightly, however, not trusting to anything but my own physical strength. Then he got a strong hold on me, and we lay locked in each other's arms.

In the meantime Maurice Campion had worked himself free, and he came to my assistance. But a man who for three days has been bound so that he cannot move any of his limbs independently, and so that the only exercise he can get is by craning his neck, turning his head to and fro, or violently bending his body at the hips, is not likely to be of much use for holding a struggling cow-boy in a desperate fight. Nevertheless he staggered towards us as we lay on the hard ground, each determined that the other should tire of his deadly grip.

"That you, Mortimer?" I heard him gasp hoarsely.

"Yes—have you got loose?" I managed to reply. "Bring your ropes here."

So Maurice Campion tied up Wilfrid Jerome, hand and foot, with the same cords that the latter had used to fetter him. We improved the lashings by degrees, knowing that no chances must be taken with such a man. He was therefore tied as Maurice Campion had been, at the ankles, at the knees, and at the wrists, his arms behind him, and a cord from his wrists to his ankles.

"There! That will hold him!" I said. "Now for Katherine! You stay here, Campion, and watch this man."

Running to the waggon I opened my jack-knife to cut loose Katherine from her bonds. She lay, I was glad to see, in a bed of straw. With what feverish haste, with what tender care, did I untie the bandages, torn from her own clothes, that half smothered her face, and removed the cruel gag between her teeth! She looked at me with a piteous appeal in her eyes.

"Safe! Dear girl, safe now!"

Her pretty lips were creased with the marks of her bandages, and at first she could hardly speak with her parched tongue. She was dreadfully pale, yet altogether lovely in her helpless distress. Her hands were tied in front of her and to her waist. Her riding boots had been removed and her feet were tied with two or three pieces of cord over soft cloths. As quickly as possible I freed her, and in spite of the consideration for her sex which had been shown, I knew her to have suffered great discomfort. With an arm beneath her I raised her gently to a sitting position.

"Katherine!"

The returning colour fled again from her lips, her head fell over on to my shoulder, with her hair half across my breast. She had fainted!

Campion was approaching as I lowered Katherine's head to its pillow of straw. He came like a man with leaden feet.

"Water! For God's sake! Water!"

Poor man, his appearance was dreadful. A bloody bandage was tied roughly around his head, and matted blood clung to his cheek and half filled one of his blood-shot eyes.

I cast about me for a vessel and found a small pail. With it in my hand I ran to the creek to fetch water, leaping over Wilfrid Jerome as I ran. It was some distance to the Wandis River but I went there and back in record time, as the saying is. Much of the water was spilled on the return trip, but there was ample to slake the thirst of both Katherine and her step-father. She was sitting up, speaking to him, and he was holding her, but I took his place, and held up the pail while she drank.

"Enough?"

"Father!" she muttered, motioning towards him. I passed the pail to Maurice Campion, and she looked at me gratefully.

"Shall I lift you out?"

"Please. I think I can stand."

So I took her in my arms and set her on her feet, gently, lest the change should be too much for her. She clung to me tightly, one hand on my shoulder, and I loved to feel it there. A few steps, and she sank to her knees with weakness.

"I'm not very strong yet."

So she sat on the ground and I knelt behind her, supporting her on my breast.

"Captain Mortimer!" she said in a tremulous voice, her head thrown back, and looking up at me.

"Yes!"

"Thank you for saving me. I thought they would kill us. Where's my father?"

"He's here," I replied, looking round for Maurice Campion. The big man stood against the neck of one of the horses still hitched to the waggon, his face buried in its mane, his shoulders shaking with uncontrollable grief. What was it?

But Katherine did not see him.

"The gold in the boxes—it is gold isn't it?" she said.

"Yes, I think it is," I replied.

"I heard what they said about it. They took it from my step-father—but didn't he get it from your island? Didn't he? But he didn't know it was yours. You will forgive him, won't you? As a friend of mine, you will forgive him? He would never have done it if he had known. So please, please forgive him. You will, Captain Mortimer—for my sake?"

"'For your sake?'"

"Y-es."

"Dearest, dearest—for your sake? For your sake I will do anything—anything! For your sake I was looking for it in the first place. Didn't you understand that? For your sake I am here now! Don't think I came after the Jeromes to get my gold. Don't think that! I came for your sake—for you! I don't care what happens to the gold so long as you are safe."

She half rose and turned towards me, so that we faced each other on our knees. I was unkempt

and bloody and dusty. She, dressed in a riding costume, except that her boots were missing and that her hat was gone, was wildly beautiful. Her long hair, in loose tresses, fell rippling over her shoulders and bosom, and half veiled her face. There was shyness and wonder in her eyes and her lips quivered to express what her mind hardly dared to conceive.

"But—but—you must not—! How can I—? What do you mean?"

"I mean—only what I have meant for a long time. I planned and waited for this moment—not here, not in surroundings like these—when I could tell you what I could tell no one else in the world. In Winnipeg I expected—"

"Oh, stop! You must never—"

She paused and hung her head, crimson in her cheeks, and clasping her throat with both hands.

"I must never what?" I cried impatiently.

"I don't know what you mean!"

"I only mean that I love you! And—oh, I hoped what I was doing would show that! And more—I hoped you would—would welcome me. In Winnipeg the sight of you was unexpected and I thought you were even not pleased to see me again. It was a blow to me that you would not let me call on you—after I had hoped you would be more than glad to see me. It is true I was trying to get the treasure—without it I would have had no right to speak to you like this. I know what I am—I am not very lovable, but I was conceited, perhaps. I knew I could not offer you myself alone and I

tried to get rich before you came home so that I would have the right to give you wealth as well as—all my heart!"

She was silent and hid her face still more. She did not care? I tried to speak again, but my voice was hoarse and deep. Rising, I stood before her.

"I am sorry Miss Dunbar. Some things had happened that encouraged me in my dream. You were kind to me in Scotland—too kind. I thought you valued my attentions there. Doctor Bernard saw you in Montreal, and what he told me supported my belief. But it seems he was mistaken—I was mistaken—it was all a mistake! So I suppose it will be 'Good-bye and God bless you.'"

I would have turned and walked away, but she clutched at my knees and threw back her head. Tears streamed down her cheeks as she raised her face towards me.

"Don't say that!" she cried. "Oh, don't say that, Captain Mortimer!—Dick! Dick! I do love you—oh, I do, and I always have done!"

So I lifted her, crying, to my breast.

"Katherine, darling, is it so?" I said, as, with returning courage, I kissed her. "Then I was wrong?"

"No, you were right!" she said chokingly, but laughing away her tears. And we laughed together like children—nay, like lovers—who knew no care.

"Where is your hand?" she said, for I concealed my wounded finger, "Oh, Dick, you are bleeding terribly!"

"It is my finger. Wilfred Jerome cut it."

"Cut it? How? Let me see it! Let me dress it! Dick, my dear, my dear—you poor, poor boy! Here! Put it in this pail. It must be washed with an antiseptic later. That rag of yours is no good. Here is a cleaner bandage."

She tore off half her white silk sleeve.

"Oh, no, dear!" I objected, "not that!"

"Yes, yes, dear," she said, "just this. Oh, I am so glad to give it. You were fighting that man without anything to defend yourself with, and he had a knife. Oh, the beast!"

"That is better.—Katherine, you have dressed my wounds before. It is worth being hurt to have you do it again."

There! Is that better? You must get a doctor to it."

"Doctor? No.—Really it is better already. It has stopped bleeding. It has really, Katherine.—But it's sweet to have you make a fuss of me. A cut doesn't hurt when it stops bleeding, you know."

"Oh, Dick," she said, clinging to my sleeve as I, with my bandaged hand, held back the loose hair from her face, "there is so much to talk about and so much to be done!"

"And we have all our lives to do it in," I replied, "It was such a surprise to find out that you were Mr. Campion's step-daughter."

"Oh, where is he?" she exclaimed, coming down to earth again, and bringing me with her, "My poor father! We were forgetting him."

Maurice Campion, whose existence, like that of all the human race, had faded from my memory, except in the abstract, was not now to be seen.

"He's gone!—He was crying, Katherine."

"Crying? He was crying? Poor man!"

"He stood beside this horse," I said, "and when I last looked round he was telling his troubles to the dumb brute.

"Then he was upset over you, Dick. He says he did an awful thing. But, dear, you won't be hard on him, will you? He is just a darling—if you only knew him. Let's go and find him.—Oh, there is that man! He kept me in a room in the house at the ranch, and threatened me with terrible things, until I gave him my boots."

"Did he? He shall suffer for it.—You cannot get out of here unless I carry you."

"Carry me? Can you do that, Dick—will you?"

I replied by complying, at least for a distance.

Outside on the meadow flat we met Mr. Campion returning from the river, where he had washed a wound on his head and its stains from his face, and was, in short, rejuvenated by a laving in the cooling waters. Katherine walked daintily beside me with her unshod feet.

"Ah, Captain Mortimer!" Campion said breezily, yet shaking his head with perceptible diffidence, "I hope you will listen to my apologies."

"Apologies? What for?—How is your head?"

"My head is hurt a little—not much, thank you.

Those fellows struck me with an iron bar and bound and gagged me four days ago."

"What did they do it for?" asked Katherine.

"You can guess why. I had a quantity of gold-dust and they found it out. I found it on your island—as I now learn from Katherine, Captain Mortimer. At the time I supposed that Station Island had no owner—I ask you to believe that, Sir. You left me there, you remember, after you rescued the Daws and put off for the mainland. I found this gold-dust then, and keeping it a secret, I went the next morning early and fetched it away. My intention was a mean and dishonest one—I freely acknowledge it. I owned these lands here where we stand—a few miles from my ranch. There are mineral deposits here and gold can be washed from this river—in small quantities. My intention, then, was to bring that gold-dust here in secret, in disguise—in order, you see, to come here later and pretend to discover it here. That discovery would have sold my lands. Now they will never sell, and I do not deserve to make anything on them. I see now that my plan was a contemptible one. In fact I have regretted giving way to the temptation from the first. It caused me to do things that were cowardly and low. Let me tell you. I visited my own rooms in Winnipeg in disguise in order to get a topographical map of this spot as the most suitable for hiding the gold-dust. I came to Vanista in disguise having sent the boxes before me by express, and having ordered the Jeromes to meet me with a waggon. They

met me and did not recognize me, and drove away from the railway station. I had to run after them through the village to catch them, for I dared not hire a horse in my disguise. The Jeromes had learned the contents of the boxes before my arrival, and planned to rob me. Not suspecting them I brought it out here and buried it. They then nearly killed me in the house, striking me on the head with an iron bar, and they imprisoned me in a feed-bin in the barn. Katherine came, seeking me—didn't you, Katherine?—and they told me they had her as a hostage, and they required the gold as her ransom. So I had to be brought out here to show them exactly where I had buried it. And now, Captain Mortimer, that's my apology—I've made a clean breast of it. I shall never, never cease to regret, with all my heart, having wronged a man who had done me and my son so great a service. That is the bitterest part of it."

"Mr. Campion," I said, "I hope I can assure you that I bear you no ill-will, nor do I blame you in the smallest degree for what you have done. At first, when I suspected you, I was angry. But as I followed you to the west—did you know I was after you?—I began to feel differently about it, and I could not persuade myself—though I tried hard—that you were a rogue. Certainly, to-day, as we have been following you to capture the Jeromes, my chief concern has been to find Katherine, and I only pitied you in the power of these Jeromes. I have already told the policeman

that there was gold in this affair, but I gave him no more than the bare information. These men will be brought to trial, won't they? Cannot you and I assume a partnership and a common interest in this gold-dust?"

"Do you mean in order to clear me of any suspicion which may fall on me in a court? No. I won't add insult to injury. I won't pretend before a judge or before my own friends that I have been working in agreement with you when I have been working against you. You are too generous."

"I think not, Mr. Campion. If you are in a difficulty I ought to help you out of it. How would you like to sell me this land? As owner of Station Island and of this country if I have certain cases of gold-dust transferred from one property to another, and ask you to undertake the removal, it is my own concern, is it not? How much do you want for this land? Give me a price."

Both Campion and Katherine laughed heartily at this suggestion.

"Oh, father, do sell it to him! Sell it to him as cheap as cheap!" said Katherine.

"Yes, sell it to me," I urged, "and Katherine shall be witness of the deal."

"But I have no papers to give you," he said. "Oh, yes, I could give you this map, couldn't I? There are, with the ranch lands and this bad country, about twelve thousand eight hundred acres. It would be much more suitable if I made you a gift of it. I don't like to set a price on it to you."

"Look here, we must settle it now, except for the price. Here is ten dollars on account to make it legal. Katherine, you're a witness."

"Yes. I'm a witness. It's Dick's land."

Maurice Campion seemed puzzled at the frank relationship evidently existing between his step-daughter and myself, and I saw that an explanation was necessary and tried to give it.

"And now, Mr. Campion is a witness too—to a different kind of agreement. Isn't he Katherine?"

"Dick!" said Katherine in a low voice and most demurely.

"Is it possible?" said Mr. Campion, looking benignly from one to the other.

"It hardly seems possible, Sir. I am trying hard to realize it. Katherine and I have known each other longer than you may think."

"And you're going to be married?" he observed, "Well—well, Kathie! This is perfectly splendid! What will your mother say? Does she know all about it?"

"Yes—no!" said Katherine, finding her voice, "not all about it—but some."

"Come, lassie," said Mr. Campion, "give me a kiss.—Yes, I'm a witness!—Hello, who's this—two of them.—Is this your policeman coming back with Donald Jerome?"

It was. Donald Jerome sat handcuffed on his horse with Corporal Benson proudly escorting the beaten bully.

CHAPTER XVII

PEACE AND POSSESSION

WE were a tired, shabby, ragged, but happy party—Katherine, her step-father, and myself—assembled in the parlour of my private train a few hours later. We were tired, shabby, and ragged because there is a limit to the endurance of human flesh and blood and of human clothes, and we were happy in the anticipation of happiness to come, and in the triumph of hopes over fears. Now we could sleep, and when we awakened it would be to the dawn of brighter and ever brighter day. We could sleep, but would we? There were comfortable berths behind their dainty curtains in the room adjoining—white, soft and billowy—yet still, in darkness we sat and talked. We sat and talked and smoked. There was nothing else to do, and we wanted nothing else to do. It was dark because we preferred darkness to the light of the oil lamp by which we had dined. Katherine declared the glow of our pipes, Campion's and mine, was a splendid illumination, and she loved them, our pipes. I said the light of her eyes was better and I more than loved them, her eyes. Mr. Campion questioned if I could see her eyes in the dark, unless she had

cat eyes. But, in spite of his sarcasm, I was able to reach out in the darkness, unknown to him, and clasp her hand, and I did so by the light of her glorious eyes.

So we sat and talked and smoked and waited. A telegraphic message from Mrs. Campion, in answer to our own, had cheered us greatly. She had informed the Johnston-Fullers of our safety and we were assured of a tremendous welcome on arrival. A message from the railway company's despatcher's office promised us an engine and a swift journey. The heavy boxes of treasure, now recovered and intact, were palpably realized—they were the footstools of our feet. We discussed the certainty of justice being done to the Jerome brothers on the ground of assault and detention, without mention of the theft, and agreed that it would be satisfactory to all parties concerned, unless Corporal Benson gave unnecessary evidence at the trial. We considered the possibility of even more gold being found on Station Island, and I projected a thorough search to be carried out on our honeymoon. And, upon this, Mr. Campion, remarking that such matters were beyond him, especially as he had not had a proper sleep for a week, stumbled over my feet and fumbled his way through the mahogany partition into the sleeping compartment. His action was what we two, Katherine and myself, had been longing for—though she begged him to stay with us—because we had so much we wanted to talk about. We had so much to talk about, so many anecdotes

to relate, so many plans and proposals to unfold—all in privacy and unheard—and now, though the opportunity was thrust upon us, we sank into the sweet depths of a shy silence. But hearts still speak when lips are still, there is no doubt about that, and souls have intercourse by higher means than verbal speech. And there are dreams that fill the mind that sights and sounds would soon dispel. We dreamed, my love and I, and I am not ashamed to say so. We dreamed because we loved.

The engine came and coupled up with our car. The power being supplied the lights came on and blinded me. They blinded only me, because I was awake. Katherine was asleep, one hand in two hands of mine. Her head nestled in the velvet cushion—I gazed at her in awe. Asleep. Her lovely head lay where it fell—to dream of home, and love, and me. Her lips were parted slightly—as though to speak my name. That very day those very lips had talked of love—and would again. Her throat, beneath her fallen curls, was pulsing visibly—pulsing from the heart that pulsed for me! Her wrists, not meant for bonds, were lacerated by the cruel cords that she had worn, if not for me, because of me! Beneath her feet, two silken toes that had no shoes, was placed a box of treasure—a gift, a homage rightly placed beneath her feet.

The train began to move and still Katherine slept, and still I watched, as was my right and duty. But a cooler breeze poured in the windows

with the motion of the train and I carried Katherine through and laid her softly on a bed, thanked God for all His mercies, put out the lights, and then lay down myself and slept. Slept and dreamed. And the train rushed on—on through the darkness into the light, into the dawn, into the sunshine, into the joy of life and work and love.

* * * *

In the slime, sand, and debris of rock that almost filled the bottom of the tiny cove at the island we found more treasure. When I was alone on the island in June I found there the iron handle of a box or chest. It was something I made a mental note of, and has proved to be the guide to another find. The guests and servants at the Chateau Royal were well informed of the fortune that had been recovered from Station Island, and the story naturally aroused among them a new interest in that rocky retreat of a bold Mortimer of old. But as they were given to understand that it had been removed by the present owner they had not trespassed on its ledges in search of what has made it famous. For this reason Katherine and I, without unduly attracting attention, were able to pay a trip of exploration in a small launch and continue the search which I began in June—and which was interrupted by an extraordinary sequence of events. In June, an unapplauded bachelor, I braved the muck of that green and slippery cavern, and found the handle of a box, eaten and rotten with the rust of a hundred and twenty years. In September, a responsible and

dutiful husband, clad in a swimming suit, I groped deeper yet—and was rewarded—not only with the caresses and solicitations of a nymph-like wife, who herself swam in the pool—but also by the tangible burden of more treasure trove. It was a copper case two feet by one by six inches. We got it up on to the level ground to examine it, but were unable to open it then and there. There is no locksmith like Nature, is there? The joints of that ancient coffer were sealed up by corrosion so that it might have been all one piece of metal. Eventually, when its stout lid was smashed in by a 14 lb. sledge hammer on the cement floor of the Chateau garage, in the presence of my wife—("my wife" is a very novel term in my vocabulary)—and of the *maître d'hotel*—the contents, blackened discs and gold-dust, flew in all directions. The former, having been subjected to a powerful chemical treatment to remove the encrusted verdigris, accumulated from being contained in a brazen box, were found to be coins. They were guineas of the reign of George III. of England. There were 142 of them, and we cleaned them till they glittered in their original beauty. They will certainly be a joy for ever if Katherine —my wife (!)—has her way, for she will hardly let them out of her hands.

Winnipeg, September, —th.

Capt. Richard Mortimer, D.S.O.

Dear Mortimer:

The trial of Wilfrid and Donald Jerome began yesterday, and it has brought to light an unexpected fact

about the Wandis gorge. Corporal Benson gave evidence and disclosed the fact that there was more against the Jeromes than this treatment of Katherine and myself. I mean that in cross-examination he stated that the Jeromes were thieves. The counsel, however, supposed that the gold was yours which I was about to convey—not to but from—the ranch. I expected to be fetched up for an explanation of the absence of this charge from the prosecution, but, instead, Wilfrid Jerome was sworn, and confessed what amazed me—and what will amaze you. It was nothing less than a story of washing gold from the Wandis River! Apparently he and his brother have got thousands of dollars out of it with a very primitive pan and with very little trouble. There is probably no way of getting it repaid, but there is one thing that can be done at once. The valley should be re-prospected. It is your land, but no one is as well acquainted with it as I am. Would you care to entrust it to me for that purpose? Please write at once about this matter.

There is no need for me to write about Arthur as my wife will be giving you all the gossip and news. I am amused to think that I knew so little of what was taking place before my eyes when we were all marooned on Station Island. Nancy is a very sweet girl—I think—and I know you do also.

What a world it is! Love to Katherine.

Yours sincerely,

MAURICE CAMPION.

P.S.—Our counsel says there is no fear of your presence being demanded by the defendants.—M. C.

THE END.

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